

**The autobiography of Charles Peters, in 1915 the oldest pioneer living in California, who mined in ... the days of '49 ...; also historical happenings, interesting incidents and illustrations of the old mining towns in the good luck era, the placer mining days of the '50s**

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## **Preface**

This book is published with the expectation and for the purpose of assisting the autobiographer in obtaining sufficient funds to supply him with the necessities of life in his declining years; also, to picture with historical happenings, interesting incidents and illustrations, the Good Luck Era; the Placer Mining Days of the '50s. "Those days of Old Those days of Gold." When every man With his pick and pan Could make his stake; When an ounce a day Was very poor pay And looked much like a fake; When a few sardines, With pork and beans, Which every man could bake; Made up a feast-- Not fed back East-- When he flopped a flapjack cake

CHARLES PETERS Aged 90 Years and 6 Months

1

The Autobiography of Charles Peters

MY full name is Carlo Pedro Deogo Laudier de Andriado. It means in English: Charles Peter James Laudier of Andriado. The latter being the name of the city my family originated in.

Like an animal encumbered with too long a tail, I found my full name to be unwieldy, so I amputated it at the second joint soon after leaving home. I have called myself and have been known for nearly eighty years as Charles Peters.

I was born on January 12, 1825, on the Island of Fiol, which is off the western coast of Portugal and belongs to the Government of Portugal.

My father's name was the same as my own. He held a position in the service of Emperor Dom Pedro when I was born. He was the owner of a large vineyard, employing about twenty-five men to handle the harvest of grapes and make the wine which he marketed.

My mother's maiden name was Anna Isabel Pellates. My parents were both descendants from the ancient inhabitants of Portugal called Lusitanians; who ruled the land before the Carthaginians under Hannibal and the Romans under Julius Caesar conquered the country.

I was the only child. My father lived his three score and ten, while my mother was 99 years, 11 months and 20 days old when she passed away. It was a great shock to me when I learned of her death in *her* prime, for I fully believed she would outlive the nineteenth century and reach the average age of her ancestors of over 120 years.

## 2

Owing to the continual absence of my father from our home, attending to his official duties in Lisbon, I was almost all of the time under my mother's care, and looked to her entirely for guidance and instruction. I was sent to school when I was five years old and, while there were one or two studies I was good in, it soon developed I was not born to be a scholar, and I steadily fell behind the other scholars of my age. In my studies, until, at the age of ten, I was in an embarrassing position. The social standing of the scholars was divided into two classes; the children who wore shoes and those who went barefoot. My mother had strong objections to my associating with the poorer

children who went barefoot, but, somehow, I preferred to mix with them, rather than with the children of the more prosperous parents. On account of this preference, my mother caught me in the only untruth I ever told. She accused me of playing with the barefoot children, which I denied, but she had the proof. I got a severe whipping and had red pepper put into my mouth. Then I listened to a lecture on the evil of lying that I remember to this day and I have been truthful ever since.

On account of my inability to learn my lessons, I began at the age of ten to look for my future career on the deep blue waters of the sea. A desire to emulate the deeds of my famous countryman and ancestor, Magellan, began to kindle the fire of a marine ambition in my brain. One day an American vessel came in and anchored in the bay; the school teacher dismissed school and with about four hundred school children, I went down to the dock and cheered and cheered and saluted the American flag. When I heard that the captain was so pleased with our reception that he had told the Consul he wanted one of the boys to go with him as his cabin boy, I applied for the place. I pleaded with my mother and got her consent to go upon my promise that I would obey her precepts and come back the captain of a ship. The captain promised to be my guardian, and while my mother, before we sailed, regretted her action, yet, she bade me keep my word. My father was now the private secretary of Queen Donna Marie at Lisbon. When my mother sent the document she and the captain had signed, to him, he was very angry and sent messengers to take me from the ship, but they came too late for the ship had sailed, and for the next thirteen years I was with Captain Pendleton on whaling voyages on the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. His home was in New London, Conn., and we delivered our cargoes and obtained our supplies from the New England ports we arrived at and sailed from on our voyages. My experience on board the whaler was uneventful, except in one instance. Of course, for the first few weeks after leaving home, I was seasick and homesick, but the feeling of distress from these causes soon passed off. But, had I had the authority, I would have turned the vessel back and returned to my native land never to be a sailor again.

One afternoon the captain and the first mate left a large plug of chewing tobacco, from which each had cut a piece and put in their mouths, on the cabin table. I thought that it would make me more of a sailor if I followed their example, so I took a good sized chunk in my mouth and began to chew.

I swallowed the saliva it produced, not knowing it was necessary to expectorate it. The result was I became the sickest boy that ever fell into a bunk on a ship. The captain thought I was going to die but never knew what disease I had, because I was afraid to tell him the cause. I have never tried to chew tobacco since.

On a whaling voyage to the Arctic and Pacific oceans in 1846, our vessel entered and anchored a few 4 days in San Francisco Bay. It was a good sized village then, but we had little thought of it becoming the city it now is.

### SAN FRANCISCO IN 1846

I was in New London, Conn., in 1848, when the news came of the discovery of gold in California, and I soon got the gold fever. I sailed in the ship “Elfa” from New York with several hundred other '49ers. Captain Porter was in command and when the vessel passed the Farralones he sent for me and said: Charley, you have been here before, can you pilot this ship into San Francisco Bay?” I replied: “Yes.” So I took charge of the vessel as pilot and landed it safely and was given three cheers by the men and women there when we came to anchor. Captain Porter said: “Charley, that was worth \$500 to me,” and he, in a feeling of great generosity, paid me \$20 for my services as pilot.

I arrived in Sacramento with two sacks, made from sail cloth, filled with my personal effects. I carried the sacks on my back fastened with leather straps under my arms.

### SACRAMENTO IN 1849

I hired out as a cook for \$200 a month and, after working a few weeks, I became acquainted with a man from the mines. He proposed we go to Columbia and go to gold mining and I agreed. We were going to walk and when we got ready to start it required two men to lift my two sacks of things upon my back, they were so heavy. A man standing by said to the crowd around me: “That man has a load for a jackass.” I replied: “You had better carry it, then.”

Now, like Samson, I have never shaved, but, unlike Samson, a Delilah has never shorn me of my locks-or my pocketbook--but I do not attribute to anything else except my life at sea, the fact that I was blessed with prodigious strength. I carried my load easily 6 for ten miles without stopping to rest and then my partner, who had begun to fag, proposed we take a rest. Although, it was raining, I told him to come along when he was rested and I continued on in my usual stride. About ten miles further on I overtook

#### CHARLEY PETERS AND PARTNER STARTING FOR THE MINES

a teamster with a span of horses and his wagon stuck in the mud. "Hey Cap," said he, "ain't you got a big load?. Don't you want a rest?" I said: "No, 7 I haven't had to take a rest yet." "Well," said he, "put your load in my wagon and help push over the bad places and I will give you a ride." "All right," I said, and putting my pack in his wagon I began to push on one of the wheels. In a few minutes he yelled: "Hey! Stop, Cap! You're pushing the wagon on top of my horses." He told me afterwards that I was equal in strength to his horses and if he had me with him all of the time, he would never get stuck.

I finally reached Dry Creek about eight miles from Columbia. The storekeeper there was the justice of the peace and kept a bar and a boarding house in a big tent. He had forty-six boarders and charged an ounce (\$18) a week for board. There was a big, burly fellow there who proposed to go into a partnership with me and work a claim. I agreed to it as I was looking for a chance to dig gold. Several of the miners there now began to warn me against the man, saying no man had stayed long with him and all had had trouble with him and he had thrashed two or three of his partners within the past two weeks. As I was not afraid of any man living, I bought a shovel for \$6 and started in to work with him. On the fourth day I found my shovel gone. When my partner saw I had no shovel, he began to curse me. I challenged him to fight and the men from the other claims gathered around us. The big bully struck at me, with his fist, a vicious blow, but I dodged and gave him a swat under the ear that sent him flat on his back on the ground. Every time he tried to get up, I gave him another and he, finally, too weak to talk, whispered, "enough." The justice of the peace was his friend and wanted me arrested, but every boarder threatened to quit his house if he did, and he

finally subsided. I worked the claim alone for awhile and then a miner came along and induced me to go to Jackson. I bought a span of horses and a supply of grub 8

#### THE DRY CREEK JUSTICE OF THE PEACE, ETC.

9 and with my things started for the better diggings. In Forman's Gulch, about ten miles from Mokelumne Hill, I found a man with his wife and sister-in-law working a placer claim. The man wielded a pick and shovelled the pay dirt into a bucket which his wife carried a couple hundred of feet to where the sister-in-law, a comely maiden, rocked the rocker. I have always been susceptible, and I am now, to the flattery of the female sex, and when this young maiden expressed a wish that she had my physical strength, in order to perform her task easily, I took her place and rocked for about four hours and also aided in an occasional clean up, which showed the claim was paying over an ounce a day. After awhile, I found the young lady was more interested in the result of the clean ups than basking in the sunshine of love, so, somewhat disappointed, I resumed my journey toward Jackson.

On my arrival in Jackson, in the latter part of 1850, I built a log cabin. The first night I slept in it I had the company of three rats. During the night, I felt something cold moving across my feet and thought it was one of the rats getting friendly. In the morning I found a rattlesnake curled up in a corner of my cabin. It had thirteen rattles, an unlucky number for it, for I quickly sent him where he would cease from rattling and my weary feet could be at rest.

On the North Fork of Jackson Creek, I went in partnership with a Frenchman named Douet to work a claim. Owing to mispronouncing his name, we called him "Do it." He was quite an expert, and finding a good flow of water coming down the gulch, he proposed to ground sluice the bank. We dug a ditch and soon had the water undermining the bank and caving it down in large chunks which we manipulated in the stream of water with our picks, and, as the stones were washed from their covering of earth, we cast them out. I had only been using the pan method 10

#### WASH DAY AT CHARLEY PETERS' CABIN IN 1850

11 of mining which gave a frequent result that encouraged and enthused one as the yield was small or large. We worked about nine hours ground sluicing, during which time I did not see a color and felt quite, discouraged. Unless a nugget was as big as a man's fist, it would hardly be seen in the flood of muddy water. "Do it," at last, suggested we clean up and while I went and turned off the water, he got his pan and a big clasp knife ready. When the flow of water ceased, he seated himself on the bedrock and with the pan between his knees began digging with his knife the mud out of the crevices and dropping it into the pan. Soon a yellow gleam began to appear in the pan and then my hopes began to rise. Then a nugget, weighing at least two ounces, dropped with a bang upon the bottom of the pan and "Do it," with an exclamation that sounded like "Kee-ees-Kee-Dee," looked up and smiled. "Have we struck it?." I asked. "Oui, Oui," said he, and then I knew *we* had. When "Do it" finished his cleanup and we started for the cabin to cook our supper, we had over nine pounds of gold dust in our pan. But it was the hardest work I had ever done. My back ached, my feet were wet and cold and my hands were numb. I realized then, that, while there was plenty of gold in the ground, it could not be picked up with ease. Hard labor and often poor results to many, with lucky finds to the few, I could then look into the future and see. A pang of pity passed through my mind as I thought of the many physically weak men I had seen rushing through Sacramento to the mines and of the many I had seen on my tramp to Columbia and journey to Jackson, who were totally unfit to cope with the conditions of hard work, exposure and privation it required to mine in the placers for gold.

On a Sunday I went over to Butte City prospecting and met an Englishman who had been mining in  
12

#### CHARLEY PETERS AND "DO IT" GROUND SLUICING

13 Hunt's Gulch, and he gave his opinion in the following characteristic language:

"By me soul, Peters, this is a great country! Here, a man can dig up as much gold in a day as he ever saw in his life in London. I have got already more of the bloody stuff than I know what to do with and I've only been here a week. I came here without a bloody farthing in my pocket. The Frenchman who keeps the shop down on the bottom of the hill wouldn't trust me for a shilling's



worth of bread. 'If ye got no money, go dig,' says he. 'I'll not dig on Sunday for any blarsted villain,' says I. 'Then starve,' says he. But I didn't, though I had an empty belly until Monday came, and then I dug an ounce and on Tuesday, two ounces, and on Friday I had two pounds of the bloody stuff with a lump as big as my fist. I got all this luck from not working on Sunday. Peters, did ye ever see such a big country as this?"

Hunt's Gulch, referred to by the lucky Englishman, was one of the richest placer grounds in the State. It was first located by a Frenchman named Hunt in 1848. He dug a fortune out of its banks in a few months and went back to France. It flows from the ridge about two miles from Jackson, between two steep hills, down into the Mokelumne River. It was worked over for the fourth time in 1852, and it was then estimated that over three tons of gold, valued at a million and a half dollars, had been taken out of it. It was worked for the ninth time in 1858 by Joe Mason, two brothers named Gleason and a man named Davenport, who built a flume and with a big head of water were washing dirt on an extensive scale. In February, 1858, they cleaned up, after a six days' run, 15 pounds of gold valued at over \$3000 and in one week in July, 1858, they cleaned up 34 pounds valued at \$6900. How many tons of gold and how many millions in value this auriferous gulch yielded, can only be conjectured and not computed. I passed Hunt's Gulch by when I had a chance to obtain a claim there, because a miner, named Halsey, in August, 1852, found a ten pound nugget worth \$2000 near Clinton, on the Middle Fork of Jackson Creek, and I thought there must be a flock of them there and acted accordingly.

In November, 1851, a couple of negroes began prospecting on a hill near the town of Mokelumne Hill. They sunk a hole about fifteen feet deep and found gravel that showed free gold. They filled a flour sack full of this dirt and one of the negroes toted it down to the gulch where there was a flow of water to wash it. It yielded nearly four pounds of gold valued at over \$750. Subsequently, they found dirt that paid \$10 to the pail. This started an excitement. When the news reached me on Jackson Creek, I, with others, who were making less than an ounce a day, immediately joined the rush and went to Mokelumne Hill as fast as our legs would take us. When I got there everybody, except the Jews, who never worked a placer, and the prisoners in jail, were gone to Negro Hill, the name given the scene of the new discovery. Nearly all the saloons were closed up. The saloon

and barkeepers all were locating claims. The courthouse was deserted; the county officials, with everybody else in the town, had gone to the place where rich deposits had been found. I proceeded quickly to the place. It resembled a human ant hill. I was too late to secure a location, for locations had been made a mile or two on each side of Negro Hill when I got there, but I secured not one job, but two. I found two men who desired to employ me and I went to work days for one and nights for the other, each paying me an ounce a day. I went without sleep for six days and while I was physically able to stand the strain, mentally, I was not, and I went under a doctor's care. It cost me nearly all of the twelve ounces I had earned 15 to get back into a normal condition again. I had been so successful and honest in my work for one of these men that he soon had all the gold he desired and gave me the unworked portion Of his claim, amounting to about seventeen square feet. Out of this I took

#### CHARLEY PETERS ENTERING HIS TUNNEL ON NEGRO HILL

nearly seventeen pounds of gold. On parting with him, he said: "Now, Peters, that I have all the gold I want, I'm going back home to New York and the first 16 thing I'm going to do is to gratify my fondest wish." "What's that?" I asked. "Peters," said he, "I'm going to buy a pair of suspenders for each pair of trousers I own."

When I was about fourteen years of age, I was baptized and became a member of a Baptist Church. I suppose it was due to my love of the water that I joined that sect, for all religious creeds look alike to me. There may be some difference in the route taken, but all their paths lead to the same destination, so, on my return to Jackson from Mokelumne Hill, I found the Rev. Mr. Fish trying to organize and build a Methodist church. I turned to and helped him to success. Soon after this church was organized, a big Methodist revival was started in Drytown. Among those converted was an all-round sporting character named John Rix, who was the champion foot racer of this section of the State. His religious ardor started him out in an endeavor to build a church and he sought for subscriptions among his former sporting associates. He, one day appeared at Jackson and there met a man he had beaten in a foot race several months previous and this man challenged him to a hundred yard contest for \$100 a side. Mr. Askey, one of the proprietors of the Louisiana Hotel, with several other strong supporters of all forms of sport, agreed with Rix to meet the defi and if

Rix won to let the winnings go toward building the church. The foot race was run on a Saturday afternoon on Water Street in Jackson and was witnessed by a large crowd. Rix, with the fervor of a supporter of the Lord, won with ease and then his trouble began. The foot race caused a lot of gossip and comment, and when Rix endeavored to turn over the stake, the Methodist minister and the deacons of the church refused to receive it, as it was tainted money. I learned afterward that Rix, unable to apply the money toward the building of the church, 17 backslided and painted the town red in the interest of the devil.

The Young American Hotel, built over the Middle Fork of Jackson Creek where the Broadway street bridge spans it, was a great gambling resort in the '50s. It's spacious barroom had several billiard tables and poker 'tables galore. One night, I strolled in to look on the rapid exchange of wealth, good and bad luck was causing, and became a witness to a thrilling episode. A sport called "Blue Dick," who always carried two revolvers and a bowie knife and had a local reputation of being a man ready to shoot on the slightest provocation, was playing poker with three other men. Finally, "Blue Dick" and one of the other players were dealt good hands and began calling and raising each other until "Blue Dick" demanded a sight, having put up his last dollar. This his opponent refused to give him, claiming, he had revolvers and jewelry of value which he could pawn and see the bet. With an oath "Blue Dick" laid his cards on the table and drawing his bowie knife sunk it into the table an inch deep through the cards, thus fastening them to the table. Then saying he would kill any man who touched his poker hand while he was gone, left the saloon to raise more money.

There was a little boy about six years of age who lived next door to the hotel and was a sort of a pet among the gamblers. They had taught him to chew tobacco, to swear and to play cards. He was nicknamed "Shellabark," after a little Shetland pony that had performed in a circus a year or so before. While the three players were engaged in conversation awaiting "Blue Dick's" return, "Shellabark" climbed upon his chair and unnoticed, pulled three of the cards from the blade of the bowie knife before he was seen and stopped. Two of the players, considering discretion was their best act, picked up their money and departed. 18

## THE HANGING OF ESCOBAR

19 The other player, recovering from the shock, quickly replaced the cards so that they appeared to be in the same place that “Blue Dick” left them; kept his seat and drew his revolver. This, he carefully examined and cocking it, held it down by his side awaiting the return of his adversary. “Blue Dick” returned in about half an hour. He had been unsuccessful in his effort to get more money to bet. He withdrew the bowie knife, turned over his poker hand and studied it a moment, then, without noticing it had been disturbed, with an oath, threw it aside and gave up the pot. He left the saloon a few minutes afterward and there was a big sigh of relief when he departed.

Of course, every pioneer has told of the high prices that prevailed in the early days; how flour sold for a dollar a pound; onions and potatoes a dollar a piece and a can of sardines for two dollars and a half, but the highest priced commodity I saw during this period was raisins. I sat on the counter of a store in Jackson one evening, when a Digger Indian came in with several ounces of nuggets tied up in a rag. He put the package in one bowl of the scales and laconically spoke the word “raisin.” The storekeeper leisurely walked around the counter, found a box of raisins and returning to the scales began dropping raisins, one at a time, as if they were too precious to part with, into the other bowl of the scale. When the raisins balanced the gold, he emptied them into a paper bag which he handed to the Indian who departed satisfied. Raisins at \$16 an ounce would make a Fresno grower turn over in his grave, if he heard of such a price now. Another high priced commodity I once saw was watermelon seeds. A miner, a neighbor of mine, bought a watermelon from an Ione Valley grower for \$2 in 1851 and saved the seeds. These he put up in packages of about twenty seeds in each and sold them the next Spring to miners, who wanted to 20

## CHARLEY PETERS ON SUNDAY IN '58

21 plant them, for \$1 a package. He cleared over \$30 from his thoughtfulness, but, the distribution killed the business, for next season watermelon seeds were so plentiful they could not be given away.

On the night of August 6, 1855, a gang of Mexican robbers entered the Rancheria Hotel in Amador County, and after killing five men and the landlady and wounding several other men, robbed the hotel safe of about \$10,000 in gold dust and then made their escape. Great excitement prevailed and three Mexicans were lynched by a mob from Drytown. Sheriff Phoenix, with a posse from Jackson, pursued a portion of the gang into Tuolumne County. A battle between the officers and the Greasers occurred near Chinese Camp in which Sheriff Phoenix and two of the robbers were killed. Rafael Escobar, one of the band, was captured in Columbia by Deputy Sheriff George Durham, and brought to Jackson on August 22nd to be held for trial. Durham and his prisoner were promptly met by a reception committee of citizens and in less than thirty minutes afterwards the picture of the hanging was taken. I was in the crowd, but, I am not the man up in the tree. Escobar was the tenth man hung from the limb of the live oak that overhung Main Street. The tree was destroyed in the great fire of August 23, 1862.

During the '50s the Volunteer Fire Department was a leading factor in celebrations and social entertainment. How we “tripped the light fantastic toe” then will be shown by the following copy of a programme at one of our grand balls:

22

BELLE OF THE BALL IN 1858

23

Grand Ball

Given by the Jackson Fire Department, July 4th, 1858 PROGRAMME OF DANCES

Plain Quadrille Plain Quadrille Waltz Waltz Plain Quadrille Sicilian Circle Mazurka Gallop  
Lancers French Four Polka Polka Plain Quadrille Quadrille (Old Dan Tucker) Schottische Waltz  
Varsoviennne Virginia Reel Quadrille (Basket) Schottische Danish Polka Quadrille (Pop Goes the  
Weasel) Supper March Waltz **Tickets, Including Supper, \$5.00 Ladies Free** “We won't go home  
'till morning; We'll dance 'till the break o' day.”

While mining on the Mokelumne River, my partner and myself were attacked by a grizzly bear. I fired six shots from my pistol into the Grizzly's body, which had only the effect of angering him. He chased me down the river until I took advantage of the trunk of a pine tree by getting behind it, and then drawing my sheath knife I awaited his coming. He rose upon his hind legs and struck at me with one of his forepaws. I caught it on the point of my knife and ripped it open. This caused him to turn and run for the brush.

The worst tussle I ever had with an animal was with a mastiff, kept by a German merchant in Jackson. It was the largest dog in the county, if not in the State. I entered the merchant's back yard one afternoon to deliver a load of wood, when the mastiff made an angry rush at me. As he jumped at my throat, I grasped him by both ears and bore him down to the ground. I then spit in his eye, kicked all the wind out from between his ribs and when he howled from fear, with a final kick, I let him loose and he slunk to his kennel with his tail between his legs. About fifty people had gathered to see the battle, not one of whom offered me any assistance, but, when it was over, nearly all had advice to give as to how to kill the brute. I said no, he is a whipped cur and that is sufficient.

An elderly man, whom we called the Major, and who lived on the creek a short distance from me, one afternoon came over to my claim to have a chat. Knowing he had been on Jackson Creek sometime before I came there, to satisfy my curiosity, I asked him: "Major, how long have you been here?" "Do you see the Butte over yonder?" asked he, pointing to the peak, popularly called by the people of Jackson, "Butte Mountain." "Yes," I replied. "Well," said the Major, spitting at a piece of quartz about ten feet away: "When I came here the Butte was nothing but a hole in the ground." An amusing part of this statement is, on account of my being young in years and a foreigner I, for some time afterward, believed what he said.

Another big yarn spinner, and one who could spit further and straighter than the Major, that I met in Jackson, was a man named Gibbons, who mined on the North Fork near where the Kennedy Mill is now located. He, with a partner, worked during the summer of '54 getting out pay dirt to wash when the Autumn rains came. He had a number of large chispas and by exhibiting different ones at various times and to different parties, created an impression he was frequently finding nuggets an

ounce or more in weight. He so impressed a widow, with whom he and his partner 25 boarded, that she married his partner and expected to share the fortune the final clean up would yield. Whether because he had matrimonial intentions himself and was disappointed, or from some other cause, he, late in the summer, sold out and departed for Sacramento. He tipped off to a few he was going to the mint to dispose of the bag of nuggets he had gathered and intended to return, but he never did. On the stage he made such a display of his nuggets and gave such a vivid description of how he could thrust his hand, at will, into the pile of pay dirt he and his partner had dug and draw out a nugget that some of the passengers took passage back to Jackson on the next stage to locate claims. He remained in Sacramento two days, during which time his exhibition of nuggets and tales of fabulous richness, caused a couple of hundred greedy gold seekers to start for Jackson, where their arrival astonished the residents of the town who had no information of the rich strike and that the excitement of Negro Hill was about to be repeated. As rumor, with its swift wings, made its flight from Sacramento into El Dorado, Placer and Nevada Counties, and in exaggerated terms, whispered the news of the strike, several hundred rainbow chasers, afoot, on horseback and with other means of conveyance; for the next ten days, began to pour into Jackson, eager to get a portion of the great treasure to be uncovered there. Either in derision or disgust, the disappointed crowd christened the scene of Gibbons' labors, "Humbug Hill," and those who had the means soon departed wiser but sadder men, while those who came with a shoestring and used it, had to stay and seek other means of existence. The hotelkeepers and the storekeepers were unprepared for the army. Everything eatable was eaten up. Lodgings were inadequate for the crowd and they slept on the sidewalks, in the stables and many laid down to rest on 26

#### THE JACKSON STAGE THE DAY AFTER GIBBONS ARRIVED IN SACRAMENTO

27 the hillsides. As the latch string on my cabin door always hung on the outside and there was an ample supply of food inside to fill all empty stomachs that applied, I soon had as many boarders as a county hospital and they paid me about as much as the denizens of a poor farm would. Among the number was a man named Davis who was as regular in his eating as I was and with as healthy an appetite. While he probably ate more than any other of my boarders, he paid less. He stayed over three weeks and then concluding to hike out to new diggings, insisted, as he could not pay in

gold, on giving me his note for \$50, which he would pay as soon as he made his expected strike. I held his note several years without hearing from him and as he had handed it to me folded up, I had not read it's contents. One day I did so and found it read: "One day, after death, I promise to pay, etc." As I will never meet Davis here again and don't expect to see him in the next world, I have cancelled the debt.

Now Gibbons, in his romancing, was only a few thousand feet, in a downward direction, from the truth. Had he said there was enormous riches a couple of thousand feet below instead of on the surface, he would have been truthful, for on the slope of "Humbug Hill" is the shaft and mill of the great Kennedy mine. Kennedy, I believe, and one or two of his partners, came to Jackson with this '54 rush and remained to prospect and mine in that vicinity. Kennedy and Henning located the Kennedy mine in February, 1857. They sold four-sixths at \$1000 a sixth which made the value of the mine \$6000 with six partners. They worked it a few years and finally sold out for the same amount to Jim Flemming and three other Irishmen, who, with a one-horse whim worked the mine until they struck a quartz horse several hundred feet below the surface and went broke.

28

KENNEDY MINE, JACKSON, CAL.

29

"Humbug Hill" was not entirely barren of nuggets, for two miners named Gilbert and Gleason, in February, 1859, cleaned up in one week 12 pounds of gold from their claim on the hill, and a Frenchman, named Charron, in May, '59, paid \$18,000 for a half interest in a placer claim on the Hill and took out three pounds of gold next day.

In 1855 some men were employed to sink a well in the rear of Kurczyn's store on the west side of Main Street in Jackson. One day they struck a seam of gold-bearing quartz, which caused some excitement. but as no one in the town was familiar with quarts veins and a supply of water was considered more important, interest in it soon subsided. One day I stood on Meek's Hill in South Jackson, and looking at the the Kennedy Mine, I remembered the quartz vein in Kurczyn's well and it struck me the extension of the the Kennedy vein must pass under a portion of the town of



Jackson. I made an eyesight survey and the result was the location by me of the Good Hope Mine, about midway between Meek's Hill and the mouth of the South Fork of Jackson Creek. I formed a company with three other men and began operations. We were offered \$25,000 for the mine on a thirty-day option in 1871, and it would probably have been sold to a company of Chicago capitalists, but the big fire of that year swept them out of existence as capitalists and the deal fell through. I have succeeded in sinking a shaft on the mine to a depth of 140 feet and it has cost me many thousands of dollars since. I located it in July, 1865. I still have faith and hope in the mine. I believe if it was sunk to a proper depth, it would prove to be as rich as any mine ever developed in Amador County and bring prosperity to thousands now unborn.

I stopped placer mining late in the '50s and took up a ranch and have been, ever since, endeavoring to 30

#### JACKSON, CAL., IN 1855

31 earn an honest living and prevent many dishonest persons cheating me out of my mining and other property. While my mother impressed upon me, before I left her, the precepts of always paying my just debts; of telling the truth; of avoiding gossip; of never indulging in intoxicating drink or tobacco; of keeping my word and of being kind to my fellow-men and all dumb animals, she never warned me against getting into a lawsuit and this has been the bane of my existence. I roughly estimate my experience with the Code of Civil Procedure has cost me \$14,000. I have never begun a lawsuit without believing I was right. I never lost a lawsuit without knowing I was right and d--d be he who says otherwise.

I have always been willing to assist in any way I could to add to the enjoyment of my fellow-men. At the big Pioneers' picnic held near Jackson during the '80s I was selected, on account of my known ability in that line, to cook the pork and beans for the crowd, as that dish was to be the feature of the barbecue. I had two assistants and we cooked four pots, each holding from eighty to one hundred pounds. I also cooked the hams that were to be served cold and sliced. I used a pitchfork to handle the hams and a shovel to serve the beans in large mining pans. Everybody ate

them with spoons and didn't seem to know when they had had enough. My favorite dish is pork and beans with young parsnips.

In cooking pork and beans, I first wash and carefully pick the beans over to remove those having a blemish. I then cover them with boiling water and let stand until cool and then put into a pot and cover with clean water. In a separate pot I cook the pork or bacon until it is tender. Then I put the pork and beans together and cook until done. I, myself, prefer some seasoning with a small piece of garlic, some mustard, parsley, pepper and young parsnips.

32

CHARLEY PETERS' TABLE AT PIONEER MINERS' PICNIC NEAR JACKSON, SEPTEMBER 9, 1904

33

At the head of the table, on the right, is Charley Peters; at the end on the left is his son, daughter-in-law and grandchild; seated in the center, wearing his coat, is Col. Wm. P. Peek, a pioneer of Calaveras County and now a resident of Jackson. He is 87 years of age and as hale and hearty as Mr. Peters. Raising a tin cup in his hand, stands Senator A. Camminetti getting ready to make a speech. The others are Amador pioneers who have passed on. I was married in Jackson in September, 1865, to Miss Lydia Parkinson. My wife died when my son, Charles, was born in September, 1866. My son married Miss Ella McGarr. He died in March, 1909, and his wife passed away in July, 1911. I have two grandchildren living: Raymond C. Peters is now 14 years of age and Lena Mary Peters is 12. It is my desire to leave these grandchildren something more than my name, and, if I could sink the Good Hope a thousand feet deeper it would be accomplished.

I am five feet six inches in height and weigh 195 pounds. I have enjoyed perfect health for many years and attribute it to not only inheriting a strong constitution but to my correct habits of living. I eat my food cold. For breakfast I beat up four eggs which I mix with a quart of milk; for flavoring purposes only, I add a tablespoonful of "Old Crow" whiskey. Then I add a supply of bread crumbs.

I milk my own cow and my chickens lay my eggs. I usually have pork and beans for supper and only partake of two meals a day.

My favorite beverage is Holland gin, but I have to confine myself to only indulging in it when I am treated and the treating habit seems to be going out of fashion with the younger generation. I am one of the best pedro players in the State but there are only a few of us left.

34

I have never been active in politics. I was a strong supporter of Abraham Lincoln and General Grant, since which time I have only taken an interest in Senator Caminetti's political aspirations. And now, that I have passed my 90th birthday, I feel confident I can outfight, run, jump and tango any man of my age in California, and if I was 70 years younger I would not hesitate to aspire to be the "White Hope" of the American people. I challenge any pioneer of my age to cook a pot of pork and beans and make a pot of coffee equal to my own. If he can beat me, I will eat what he cooks. And after a residence of 66 years in our beautiful State I can truthfully say: I love you California; You Sunny Land of Bliss; I love your Mountains and your Peaks, Your Rivers and your Creeks; I love your Hills and your Vales, And your poppy-covered Dales; I love your Mines and your Vines, Your sturdy Oaks and stately Pines; I love you California and your Tulips I will kiss.

Yours truly, Charles Peters

The Good Luck Era *The Placer Mining Days of the '50s*

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### Introduction

The period of time from 1848, when Marshall discovered the first historical nugget, until the '60s, was, in California the placer mining era.

Nearly every man who came to California in the '50s did so with the purpose of hunting for gold and the State had then, literally speaking, a population of gold hunters.

The search for the precious metal was in the gulches, ravines, creeks and rivers; on the tops and sides of hills; beneath the rocks and under the roots of trees, wherever a color could be found and the finding of nuggets from two, four to even ten pounds in weight was almost as numerous as the miners themselves.

Unless a nugget of unusual size, shape and weight was unearthed its exhibition, as a “find,” would occasion nothing more than a casual remark, and even the finding of one worth a few thousand dollars in value would hardly cause a thrill of excitement.

Nearly every man who mined carried as a pocket piece or wore as a pin fastened on his shirt front a nugget that was a memento of a lucky “find.”

The “buck” passing from player to player in a poker game to designate the turn to “ante” was often a chispa worth, in value, more than stakes upon the table. Every jeweler's store displayed in its show window and show cases, quartz boulders, yellow veined with gold, often containing a fortune, and surrounded with a flock of nuggets--it was a sight for the greedy eyes of avarice to feast upon with avidity.

## 40

Undoubtedly, every man who delved with pick and shovel; who panned and sluiced in these placer mining days had some interesting incident stored in his memory when good luck camped upon his trail, but very few of them have ever been published. Many of these “finds” have had a preponderating influence, not only on the individuals who made them, but upon whole communities as well; sometimes, changing the drift of a human tide to a moving current of gold-seeking endeavor and some have exerted an influence upon future generations that has been felt in the destiny of nations. They are, therefore, of unusual interest to any one who has a desire to study the effect of suddenly acquired wealth upon human nature.

It is a long way from the placer, the pick and the pan to the mine, the mill and the cyanide plant; from the long tom to the dredger--not so much in length of time as in knowledge.

The nomadic prospector has given place to the professional mining engineer; the good luck gathering of the nuggets strewn in the placers by the forces of nature has been supplanted by the systematic extraction of gold from the treasure vaults of the quartz ledges by capital and metallurgical science; but there will always be an interest felt and an entertainment enjoyed in the good luck incidents of the placer mining days. While these days are gone forever and the men who made them what they were are passing away, their influence for good or evil will remain for many a decade to come. Had the placer mining days never existed the others would not have come and to show how they came into existence and benefited or injured those participating in their stirring events, the pages of this book will endeavor to explain.

41

### **Good Luck! What is It?**

MANY of the Good Luck stories of the placer mining era read like tales from the “Arabian Nights.” Luck was a word to conjure with then. In no other pursuit, except actual gambling, was the element of chance a more potent factor. In placer gold mining it was the individual, himself, who had to woo fortune. With gold hunting and gambling the predominating occupations of a majority of the population to the indefinite term of Luck was a change in a man's financial condition almost unanimously attributed.

Fortuna, the Goddess of Luck, was never a respecter of persons. Here, as in myth, she showed that neither sex, race, religion nor previous condition influences her bestowal of favors or frowns. Neither science nor sorcery, -invention nor inspiration had anything to do with the turn of luck during the placer mining days. Poverty was often changed to affluence and destitution to prosperity by the blow of a pick. It was this great uncertainty that gave to placer mining a charm words are inadequate to express. Every placer miner worked with a hope and expectation of washing into sight a lump of gold or a yield of nuggets that would make for him the longed-for stake. With hope burning brightly, he often delved where prospects were poor and results nil, but sustained with the possibility that the next strike of the pick or the washing of the next pan of dirt would be the harbinger of a fortune, he cheerfully toiled on. It is then not surprising that: “How's your luck?”

became a common form of salutation and took the place of “Good morning” and other popular phrases of salutation. 42

**JAMES WILSON MARSHALL** This picture of James Wilson Marshall was given to the writer in 1870, by Mr. Marshall personally. He was then 60 years old. He was born in Huntington Co., New Jersey, October 8, 1810. He came to California in 1844, and died at Coloma, El Dorado Co., California, August 10, 1885, being nearly 75 years old. An interesting incident is the fact that now, in 1915, the surnames of the President and vice-President of the United States comprise a part of Mr. Marshall's name.

43 It was so with Hebrew and heathen; with Methodist and Mormon; with Vermonter and Virginian; with a Mongolian John and a Mexican Don; with the Banker and the Bum in those days of uncertain events and Fortuna's fickle ways.

With the motley horde of gold seekers, whether white or black, yellow or mixed, Luck was a factor co-existent with life itself. Good Luck has been aptly defined as being in the right place at the right time and the sequence of events in the Placer Mining Era of the '50s gave rise to the belief that it depended as much on luck as on personal endeavor to succeed.

The aphorism: “Gold is found where you find it” came from this prevailing idea and it is in keeping with the spirit of those times that we publish these facts and incidents herein printed as “Good Luck” stories.

## **THE FIRST NUGGET**

It was a small chispa that James W. Marshall found. It was worth, he says, about fifty cents. Though small in value, what an immense influence upon the destiny of millions of the human race its accidental finding has wrought!

It was an unlucky find for both Marshall and General John A. Sutter, the two men, who, on account of being adjacent should have profited most. Neither was capable of taking advantage of the rapid changes the wild rush of gold seekers brought about and ill-luck seems to have followed them in

the train of events Marshall's famous chispa produced. Had it never been found by him, both he and General Sutter would have, undoubtedly, plodded on in their peaceful ways, contented to pursue their tranquil vocations from sunrise to sunset, day after day, their names unknown to fame and unsung by posterity.

44

## SUTTER'S MILL

45

Marshall's story has often been published but it must be told again in these pages as it is the one great act in nugget finding that has changed the destiny of nations.

Without the gold that has flowed into the treasuries of the world from the sources of supply this discovery has opened up, the power of the great nations on the earth, their advancement and condition would be far different from what it is today.

Marshall's story is as follows:

“Toward the end of August, 1847, General Sutter and I formed a co-partnership to build and run a sawmill upon a site selected by myself, now known as Coloma. We employed P. L. Weimar and family to remove from the fort to the millsite to labor and cook for us.

The first work done was the building of a double log cabin about half a mile from the millsite.

We commenced building the mill about Christmas. Some of the mill hands wanted a cabin near the mill. This was built and I went to the fort to superintend the construction of the mill-irons, leaving orders to cut a narrow ditch where the race was to be made. Upon my return in January, 1848, I found the ditch cut as directed and those who were working on the same were doing so at a great disadvantage, expending their labor upon the head of the race instead of the tail end. I immediately changed the course of things, and upon the 19th day of January, 1848, discovered the gold near the lower end of the race about two hundred yards below the mill. William Scott was the second man to see the metal. He was at work at a carpenter bench near the mill. I showed the



gold to him. Alexander Stephens, James Brown, Henry Bigler and William Johnston were likewise working in front of the mill framing the upper story. They were called up next and saw the piece of metal. P. L. Weimar 46 and Charles Bennett were at the double log cabin a half mile distant. In the meantime, we put in some wheat and peas, nearly five acres, across the river. In February Captain Sutter came to the mill for the first time. Then we consummated a treaty with the Indians which had been previously negotiated. The tenor of this was that we were to pay them \$200 yearly in goods at Yerba Buena prices for the joint possession and occupation of the land with them. They agreed not to kill our stock nor burn the grass within the limits of our treaty.

At the time Captain Sutter, myself and Isaac Humphrey entered into a co-partnership to dig gold.”

#### MRS. WIMMER'S ACCOUNT

Next to Marshall, P. L. Wimmer--his name is spelled Weimar and Wimmer in the accounts--his wife and son are most prominently connected with the discovery of gold. Mr. Wimmer's place at Sutter's mill seems to have been that of assistant to his wife and as he only corroborates what she relates in her statement made in San Francisco in 1871, her's will be used instead of his.

#### MRS. WIMMER'S FIRST NUGGET

The nugget given to Mrs. Wimmer by Marshall and tested in the boiler of soft soap was in size and shape like a lima bean but much thinner. It weighed over 1/4 of an ounce and was valued at the mint at \$5.12. Mrs. Wimmer kept it for many years finally giving it to a friend.

#### 47

Mrs. Wimmer was the mother of a family of seven children. They came to California across the plains with fourteen other families from Missouri in 1846. Arriving at Sutter's Fort, Wimmer enlisted in Fremont's command and remained with it four months. He was with one of the relief parties that went to the aid of the Donner party. The family was provided with living quarters by General Sutter, and when Marshall started out with his force to build the sawmill they accompanied him. Wimmer was a sort of a handy man around the camp and looked after the Indians while Mrs.

Wimmer cooked and, probably, washed and mended for the white men in the party. Her statement is as follows:

“They had been working on the mill race, dam and mill about six months, when one morning along in the last days of December, 1847, or first week of January, 1848, after an absence of several days to the fort, Marshall took Wimmer down to see what had been done while he was away. The water was entirely shut off and as they walked along, talking about the work, just ahead of them on a little rough, muddy rock lay something bright like gold. They both saw it, but Marshall was the first to stoop and pick it up. As he looked at it he doubted it being gold. Our little son, Martin, was along with them, and Marshall gave it to him to bring to me. He came in a hurry and said 'Here, mother, here is something Marshall and pa found and they want you to put it into saleratus water and see if it will tarnish.' I said: 'This is gold and I will throw it into my lye kettle.' I had just tried it with a feather and if it was gold it would be gold when it came out. I finished off my soap that day and set it out to cool and it stayed there till next morning. At the breakfast table one of the workmen raised up his head from eating and said: 'I heard something about gold being discovered. What about 48 it?' Marshall told him to ask Jennie and I told him it was in my soap kettle. Marshall said it was there if it had not gone back to California. A plank was brought for me to lay my soap on. I cut it in chunks but it was not to be found. At the bottom of the pot was a double handful of potash which I lifted in my two hands and there was the gold piece as bright as could be. Marshall still contended it was not gold, but whether he was afraid his men would leave or he really so thought I don't know. Wimmer remarked it looked like gold, weighed heavy and would do to make money out of. The men promised not to leave the mill until finished. Finally, not being sure it was gold Wimmer urged Marshall to go to the fort and have it tested. One day, some time afterward, Marshall was packing up to go away. He had gathered a good deal of gold dust and had it buried under the floor. In overhauling his traps he said to me in the presence of Elisha Packwood: 'Jennie, I will give you this piece of gold, I always intended to have a ring made from it for my mother, but I will give it to you.' I took it and still have it in my possession.”

Now, there are two different statements regarding the finding of the first nugget. They would indicate there is more than one first nugget. Both statements are undoubtedly correct, but they refer to separate incidents, occurring, perhaps, on the same day and only a few hours apart.

Wimmer and his wife would not know of the doings of Marshall as stated by him unless he told them and he could have conversed and acted with the men, as they say he did, after he had consulted with them.

Another striking feature about both statements is the uncertainty as to the date on which the gold was found. While these people knew the year, the month and the day of the week, because they rested on Sunday, they evidently had no use for a calendar. They kept no dates and had no concern as to the date of the month as each day came and went. Marshall, by remembering certain things done before and after, finally cornered the 19th of January and stabbed it, while Mrs. Wimmer knows it was after Christmas Day, because some bottles of brandy, sent by General Sutter for the workmen to celebrate Christmas with, had been emptied before gold was discovered. Our learned savants, after diligent research and historical argument, have determined on January 24, 1848, as the date gold was discovered. A little matter of five days ought not to make any great difference to us at the present time, as the main thing really happened, that is, gold was discovered. So we will let it go at that.

Another interesting feature in this incident is the activity of the ubiquitous small boy. Mrs. Wimmer says her son, Martin, was present when Marshall picked up the first nugget and was the messenger who brought it to her to test in saleratus water. One of the workmen on the mill has stated that when General Sutter visited the mill in February to investigate the gold discovery, the men, who had been picking up pieces of gold in the mill race, determined to “salt” it by distributing the pieces so that the General would easily see them and become unduly excited. They did not seem to treat the event seriously or as of much importance. The small boy was there and as the party prepared to go with the General to look at the mill race, he skipped off ahead, gathered up the pieces of gold distributed by the workmen and spoiled the joke. Then the General, in order to protect his industries from ruin and save what he could from what he surmised was impending disaster, exacted a promise from the

workmen that they would keep the discovery a secret for six weeks, but he overlooked the small boy.

A few days after the General's visit to the mill, a teamster appeared at the fort, bought a bottle of brandy and paid for it with a piece of gold the small 50

#### MARSHALL'S MONUMENT AT COLOMA, CAL.

51 boy, at the mill, had given to him. From that time on the news spread.

All hail to the small boy! He is here! he is there! he is everywhere!

Another noticeable thing connected with this event is that of the fifteen or more men present, by accident, at the time of the discovery of gold, and who had the opportunity the acquisition of gold is supposed to give, not one, in any other way, has left his "footprints on the sands of time."

That there were a number of people who found gold in California before Marshall did, history has proven but none gave it to the world and attracted attention. One of the nearest approaches to a discovery that would have taken the luck from Marshall was that of Mrs. Joseph Aram. Her husband, Joseph Aram, and herself starting from New York were members of an immigration party in September, 1846, coming into California and camped at the mouth of a small creek that emptied into the South Fork of the Yuba river near where now is the boundary line between Nevada and Placer counties. Mrs. Aram, in scooping out with her hands, a small hole in the sand for an improvised washtub, noticed and picked up several small pieces of yellow metal which were examined by members of the party and pronounced to be gold.

This was an eventful day to the party; not only did Mrs. Aram find several small nuggets of gold, but Mr. Aram killed a bear, another of the party a deer and a messenger arrived from Sutter's fort announcing the breaking out of war between the United States and Mexico. He urged the party to hasten to the fort and get protection from General Fremont's detachment. In the excitement the news caused the gold incident was neglected. Mr. Aram was made a captain of a company and sent to Santa Clara Valley. He was afterwards placed in charge of the construction of 52

HON. EUGENE ARAM OF SACRAMENTO, CAL.

53 a fort at Cypress Point near Monterey and lie was there in January, 1848.

After Marshall's discovery, Mr. Aram returned to the old camping ground only to find the ground occupied by miners who were making big pay. Mr. Aram was a member of the first Constitutional Convention in 1849, and a member of the first session of the Legislature. He died in San Jose March 30, 1898. His son, Eugene Aram, was born in Monterey, January 26, 1848, a few days after the discovery of gold, and is said to be the first child born in California of white native-born American parents. He was State Senator from Yolo County in 1895-97 and is now a prominent attorney of Sacramento, California.

### **THE FATHER OF PLACER MINING IN CALIFORNIA**

John S. Hittell, writing of this event has stated:

“Marshall was a man of an active enthusiastic mind and he at once attached great importance to his discovery. His ideas, however, were vague. He knew nothing about gold mining. He did not know how to take advantage of what he found. Only an experienced gold miner could understand the importance of the discovery and make it of practical value to all the world. That gold miner was fortunately at hand. His name was Isaac Humphrey. He was living in San Francisco, when, in the month of February, 1848, Charles Bennett, one of the employes at the Coloma Mill, went to San Francisco to have the yellow stuff tested, as there was still some doubt as to its being gold.

Bennett told of his errand to a friend he met in San Francisco and this friend introduced him to Humphrey, who hand mined for gold in Georgia. He was, therefore, competent to pass an opinion upon the question. Humphrey knew it was gold and on being 54 informed of the location where gold was being found departed for Coloma and arrived there on March 7, 1848. He failed to induce a number of his friends to go with him and they considered him foolish to go. At Coloma he found some of the men talking about the gold and in a desultory way looking for pieces, but no one was actually engaged in mining and the work on the mill was proceeding in a leisurely manner.

On March 8, Humphrey began prospecting with pick and pan and was soon satisfied the ground was rich in gold. He then made a rocker and commenced the first placer mining for gold in California.

Others, seeing how to do it, soon followed his example, and as more and more abandoned their regular occupations and began to mine, the country was, in a few months, in the throes of a social and industrial revolution.”

Mr. Humphrey was in a few days after arriving at Coloma, followed in his mining operations by a Frenchman, named Jean Baptiste Ruell, who was popularly known as Baptiste. He had mined for gold in Mexico. He had been employed by General Sutter to cut timber with a whipsaw and for over a year had been so employed on what became known as Weber Creek, several miles east of Coloma. His mining experience made him an excellent prospector and his knowledge was of great service in teaching the novices the principles of placer mining. When he had viewed the diggings at Coloma, he declared there were richer placers on the creek where he had been sawing timber, and he wondered why he had not made the discovery himself.

Being of a religious turn of mind, he comforted himself with the reflection, it was the will of Providence that gold should not be discovered until California was in control of the American people.

55

## **HOW PLACER MINING WAS SPREAD**

During March, 1848, P. B. Reading, afterwards a prominent and wealthy citizen of northern California and who then owned a large rancho on the Sacramento River, in what is now Shasta County, visited Coloma to take a look. He declared from the appearance of the country there must be gold on his rancho and in a few weeks came the news of rich diggings being found on Clear creek, where Reading was at work with his Indians minIng.

About the same time came John Bidwell to Coloma to take a look. He was then living on a rancho on the Feather River. He went away with the belief that gold was in quantity on his land and soon was heard the news that Bidwell and his Indians were mining a rich placer on Bidwell's Bar.

On April 26, 1848, the first authentic announcement in a San Francisco newspaper was made of the gold discovery.

It stated that a man had arrived from the gold region near Sacramento, and had reported many rich discoveries being made, instancing one, where seven men had washed out \$9600 in gold in fifteen days and had found one large piece worth at least \$6. This started the rush from San Francisco. By August, 1848, placer mining had become an important California industry and a descriptive account of the Coloma mining district was published, which said: "There are now about four thousand white people, besides several hundred Indians, engaged in mining and from the fact no capital is required, they are working in companies on equal shares or alone as individuals. In one section of the diggings, called the 'Dry Diggings,' no other implement is necessary than an ordinary sheath knife to pick the gold from the rocks. In other parts, where the gold is washed out, the machinery is very simple, being an ordinary trough, made of plank about ten feet long, two feet wide with a riddle or sieve at one end, to hold the larger gravel, and three or four small bars across the bottom, about half an inch high to keep the gold from going out with the water and dirt at the lower end. When this trough is set on rockers, it is given a half rotary motion to the water, which carries the dirt inside to the end. By far the largest number use nothing but a large tin pan or an Indian basket, into which they place the dirt and shake it about until the gold gets to the bottom and the dirt is carried over the side in the form of muddy water. It is necessary in some cases to have a crowbar, pick or shovel, but a great deal is taken up with large horns, shaped like spoons at the large end. From the fact that no capital is necessary and a fair compensation to labor is obtained without the influence of capital, men, who were only able to procure a month's provisions, have now thousands of dollars in gold dust at their disposal. The laboring class has now become the capitalists of this country.

As to the richness of the mines, were we to set down half of the truth it would be locked upon, in other countries, as a Sinbad story. Many persons have collected in one day from \$300 to \$800 of the finest grade of gold and for many days have been averaging \$75 to \$150.

Although this is not universal, yet, the general average is so well settled that when a man with his pan or basket does not easily gather \$40 a day, he moves to another place to find better diggings. These four thousand people at work will add to the aggregate wealth of our territory about four thousand ounces or \$64,000 a day.”

In 1853, five years later, the production of gold from California placers was officially reported at \$65,000,000, 57 annually, and \$204,000,000 had been sent to the Philadelphia mint in that time.

The Coloma district must have been a very rich section and how simple was the process of placer mining is shown by the result of two days mining in '48, by a fifteen-year-old boy named Davenport, who washed out in that short time fourteen pounds of gold worth about \$3000. It also must have been very hastily and carelessly worked at that time, as there is a record of a mining company of six men, working a claim in 1855, within a few yards of the Sutter mill and making an ounce a day to the man.

Samuel Brannan, a Mormon leader, appears on the scene at this time as the pioneer merchant of this gold region. He was the first man to take advantage of the changed condition of affairs and to make a fortune out of merchandising. A few years afterward, he was said to be in receipt of an income of \$250,000 a year from his business and real estate investments. He died in 1880, a, comparatively speaking, poor man, his fortune made in the '50s being lost in unprofitable investments.

The general public knew very little about gold at the time of its discovery in California. Only those who handled it in their lines of business knew its characteristics and something more a-bout it than its color. Many were fooled with stuff that had a glitter, as the following item, published in The New York Evening Post, of January 26, 1849, shows:



“A California Damper-We are told that Messrs. Savage and Hawkins, Gold Assayers at 128 William Street, have received a lump of gold that was supposed to be California gold, weighing twenty-six ounces, Troy, to be assayed. It was not affected by acids, but in refining it got evaporated. It proved to be a piece of sulphurets of iron. The owner bought it in San Francisco for \$7 an ounce, giving merchandise in exchange.”

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SUTTER'S FORT IN '48

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### **SUTTER'S FORT**

*Written by Lucius H. Foote in 1878* I stood by the old Fort's crumbling wall On the eastern edge of the town; The sun through clefts in the ruined hall, Flecked with its light the rafters brown. And, sifting with gold the oaken floor, Seemed to burnish the place anew; While out and in, through the half closed door, Building their nests, the swallows flew. Charmed by the magic spell of the place, The present vanished, the past returned; While rampart and fortress filled the space And yonder the Indian camp-fires burned. I heard the sentinel's measured tread, The challenge prompt, the quick reply; I saw on the tower above my head, The Mexican banner flaunt the sky. Around me were waifs from every Clime, Blown by the fickle winds of chance; Knights Errant, ready at any time For any cause to couch a lance. The stanch old Captain with courtly grace, Owner of countless leagues of land, Benignly governs the motley race Dispensing favors with open hand. His long horned herds on the wild oats feed While brown vaqueros with careless rein, Swinging reatas, at headlong speed Are dashing madly over the Plain.

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### **THE HALCYON DAYS OF '48**

Mexico ceded California to the United States by treaty signed in May, 1848, and for the rest of the year there was an interregnum that gave to the Coloma mining region a peaceful existence as far as governmental exactness was concerned. There was a military authority, but no local officials to

offensively officiate. There were no taxes to pay and consequently no tax collectors. Everybody was mining. The banker, the barber, the baker and the hundred other occupations that go to make up a well-organized community disappeared and all men became of one class. There were no saloons, gambling halls or dance houses, consequently, no barkeepers, gamblers or Cyprians. There were no churches, newspapers or theaters, consequently no ministers, editors or actors. No court houses or jails, consequently no crimes or criminals. Society was on a level. There was no 7 o'clock whistle in the morning. The educated college man might be the partner of an illiterate Mexican. It did not require an education to mine for gold. Muscle, energy and perseverance were the requirements. The poorest man in the crowd in the morning had the chance of being the richest when the final cleanup at night was made.

The average of nine parasites to one producer of new wealth from the soil, as prevailed in settled communities, did not exist here. There was a thousand miners to one storekeeper and no occupations between.

General Sutter in mournful tones, deplorably pictures in a written account, the situation at this time as he sat alone in his deserted fort. He says:

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“The first party of Mormons employed by me left For digging gold and very soon all followed and left

GEN. JOHN A. SUTTER

me with only the sick and lame. At this time I could say everybody left me from the clerk to the cook. 62 Great damages I had to suffer in my tannery which was just doing a profitable and extensive business. The vats were filled and a large quantity of half-finished leather and likewise a large quantity of rawhides of my own killing were spoiled. The same thing occurred in every branch of business which I carried on.

I began to harvest my wheat but even the Indians could not be kept; they were impatient to go to the mines.”

On May 19, 1848, General Sutter reports the first rush from San Francisco to the Coloma mines. They filled up the fort, where only an Indian boy and himself remained. There were merchants, lawyers, doctors, sea captains, sailors and soldiers in the crowd, and the General says: “Some of them acted just crazy.”

General Sutter afterward essayed to mine. With wagons filled with supplies and about one hundred Indians and fifty Kanakas he went forth, finally locating on Sutter Creek, where the nondescript crowd he took with him did not make their salt and he gave up his fitful mining effort in disgust.

But the rush of '49 changed all these conditions and General Sutter probably thought with Goldsmith: “Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey, Where wealth accumulates and men decay.”

With the coming of the best, mingled with the worst products of humanity, from all parts of the world in 63 the mad quest for gold, a phase of civilization developed that had never existed before.

## CHARLEY PETERS PANNING

The census of California in 1860 showed a population of 379,994. Of these there were natives of the United States 233,406; of China “34,935; of Ireland 64 33,147; of Germany 21,646; of Great Britain 17,159; of France 8562; of Italy 2805; of South America 2250. Of this number 82,573 gave their occupation as mining. Considering that a number equal to those in the State in 1860, arrived and then returned to the homes from whence they came, with fortunes or misfortunes, during the placer mining era; that thousands dispersed, following mining excitements, into the neighboring territories; that the mortality rate was high through violence, accidents, intemperance, exposure and epidemics, it is very probable 1,000,000 people came to California between the years of 1849 and 1861.

## HOW THE PLACERS WERE WORKED

Placer mining is followed in half a dozen different ways, none requiring investment of much capital but all depending upon muscular energy to make a success. The pick and pan, using the hands to gather the pay dirt and washing in a pool of water with a half rotary motion of the pan, is the simplest.

Next comes the rocker. This machine has some resemblance to a child's cradle, with similar rockers, and is rocked by means of a handle fastened to the cradle box. The cradle box consists of a wooden trough about twenty inches wide, forty inches long with sides about four inches high. The lower end is left open and on the upper end sets a hopper or box, twenty inches square with sides four inches high and with a sheet-iron bottom pierced with round holes a half inch in diameter. When a sheet of iron or zinc could not be obtained a sieve of willow limbs was used. Under the hopper is an apron of canvas which slopes down from the lower end of the hopper to the upper end of the cradle box. A wooden riffle bar an inch high is nailed across the bottom of the cradle box about the middle and another at its lower end. Under the cradle box is fastened the rockers and near the middle is placed the 65 upright handle by which the motion is imparted from the clasped hand and arm.

When pay dirt and water were adjacent, two men were sufficient to operate a rocker steadily. Seated on

#### CHARLEY PETERS WORKING A ROCKER

a block of wood or a stone, the man operating, rocked with one hand and with a long handled dipper, he dipped water from a pool and poured it on the dirt in the box with the other. His partner could keep the hopper supplied by carrying the dirt in a bucket or Indian basket from the bank being mined. When the fine particles of dirt had been washed away through 66

#### CHARLEY PETERS WORKING A "LONG TOM"

67 the holes in the hopper, the rocks were cast out and the hopper filled again with dirt to be washed. The gold was caught on the canvas apron and by the riffle bars, while the water washed it free of the fine sand that had passed through the holes of the hopper.

In the dry diggings, called such, because water was not available, a method Of separating gold from the earth was introduced by the Mexicans from Sonora. The pay dirt was dug and dried in the sun, then pulverized by pounding it into a fine dirt. With a batea, or a bowl-shaped Indian basket, filled with this dust, held in both hands, it was tossed skillfully in the air, allowing the wind to blow away the dust and catching the heavy particles of gold in the basket, repeating the process until there was little left but the gold.

The “Long Tom” was a single sluice with a sieve made of sheet iron, with numerous holes punched in it and a box underneath with riffle bars across it to hold the gold. It was really an enlarged rocker box without the rockers. The pay dirt was shovelled in at the upper end and a rapid current of water washed the earth away, the gold falling into the box below.

In the gulches, creeks and rivers where there was not much fall and an ample flow of water, sluice boxes became the vogue.

A string of sluice boxes was laid of sufficient length to keep every miner in the employ of the claim working. A sluice box was made of three planks, usually twelve feet long and a foot or more wide. Each sluice fitted into the upper end of the one below and in the lower end of each, riffle bars were placed to hold the gold. Sometimes a piece of blanket or a supply of quicksilver was used to catch the fine particles. The sluice line, as the dirt was shovelled away, was placed on either wooden trestles or stood on pinnacles of earth left standing to support it. As the pay dirt was shovelled into the sluice boxes, a sluice head of water washed the fine particles away. A miner with a pitch fork, at intervals, straddled the sluice line and travelled up and down it, removing the rocks too large to be carried away by the flow of water in the sluices.

Ground sluicing, where a head of water with sufficient fall was obtainable, was an effective adjunct to all

## THE FIRST HYDRAULIC MINE

forms of placer mining, by rapidly removing large quantities of dirt and letting the gold, separated from it, drop upon the uneven surface of the bed rock.

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Hydraulic mining, evolved from an idea of a Frenchman named Chabot at Nevada City in 1852, and the introduction of arastres and quartz mills, was the beginning of capitalization to handle the mining industry, and they rapidly took the place of these simple aids to muscle in obtaining gold.

### **FREAK IDEAS OF PLACER MINING**

While the tools and other requirements for placer mining are simple and inexpensive, few people had any knowledge of them at the time the discovery of gold in California became known to the world, and Yankee ingenuity, in the Eastern States, at once, solved a number of imaginary difficulties.

Inventors who had never seen a river bar, a placer bank or a nugget of gold in a bed rock crevice, designed, built and shipped in vessels around the Horn or conveyed on wagons across the plains, some of the most extraordinary arrangements of machinery with which to mine for gold the world had ever seen. While these useless machines lay rotting on the beach and other vacant places, where they were dumped, after arrival in California and were found to be worthless for gold mining, they were the cause of many a droll remark. Yet, they represented many a financial tragedy and many a bitter disappointment to their inventors and investors.

Some of these inventors appeared to have an idea, probably derived from hearing grains of gold spoken of, that gold was found in shape like grains of wheat and should be separated from the earth as wheat is separated from chaff. Machines for accomplishing this object were made of wood, combined with all kinds of base metals, operated by cranks, treadles and other means of imparting motion, and one provided an arm chair for the operator to sit in comfort while working. One machine that came around the Horn was invented 70 and built in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The inventor brought two negroes with him to operate it. It was, in shape, like a huge fanning mill with sieves arranged for sorting the gold; the small pieces were to drop into bottles and the large

pieces into barrels attached at opportune places to the machine, the theory being that the bottle could be carried and the barrels could be rolled, when filled, from the mine to the camp. Another idea centered upon an immense tub, made of staves, which was to be placed at the mouth of a gulch or a creek, and catch all the pay dirt washed down. When filled, the gold was to be separated by stirring the mass around, the gold falling to the bottom and the dirt flowing out with the water from rows of holes arranged around the tub, to be opened when desired. Another inventor brought a supply of diving helmets and apparatus with an idea of organizing a company of divers, who would pick up the gold lying on the bottom of lakes and rivers, too deep to be drained or diverted.

A newspaper reporter in San Francisco in 1851 wrote the following:

“We yesterday saw upon a vacant lot in this city a few tons of patent gold-mining machinery brought to California by some unfortunate inventor. It is offered for sale cheap. 'A portion of the apparatus is admirably adapted for the churning of butter or the extraction of dirt from foul linen and the balance would puzzle a smart engineer to say to what it could be applied.”

Possibly the following parody on “Susannah,” a popular song in the '50s, was written in honor of these ardent rainbow chasers. “I soon shall be in 'Frisco, And then I'll look all round; And when I see the gold lumps there, I'll pick 'em off the ground, I'll scrape the mountains clean, my boys,

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I'll drain the rivers dry; A pocketful of gold bring home, So brothers, don't you cry! O California! That's the land for me! I'm bound for San Francisco, With my wash bowl on my knee.”

## **HOW IT FEELS TO FIND GOLD THE FIRST TIME**

The ecstasy a novice feels when beginning to mine for gold and first uncovers the object of his search, must be akin to what a young California father feels on the birth of his first native son or daughter.

E. Gould Buffum, a young miner who was on Weber Creek in 1848 and was afterwards the editor of a San Francisco journal, describes his experience as follows:

“I shall never forget the delight with which I first struck and worked out a crevice. It was on the second day after our installation in our little log cabin. The first day we were employed in locating ourselves and prospecting for the most favorable places to commence operations. I had slung pick, shovel and bar upon my shoulder, placed my pan under my arm and then trudged merrily away to a ravine about a mile distant. With pick, shovel and bar I did my duty and soon had a large rock in view. Getting down into the hole I had dug I seated myself upon the rock and commenced careful search for a crevice. I finally found one that extended across the rock. It was filled with a hard bluish clay, mixed with gravel, which I took out with my knife. At the bottom of the crevice I saw strewn along its entire length, bright yellow gold in nuggets of the size of a grain of wheat or a bean. Eureka! Oh, how my heart beat! I sat still and looked at the treasure some minutes before I could touch it, greedily drinking in the pleasure of gazing upon gold for the first time in my life within my grasp. I felt a sort of bravado in allowing it to remain there. When my eyes had sufficiently feasted upon it I scooped it out with the point of my knife and an iron spoon into my pan and ran with it to my camp delighted. It was about two ounces in weight.

## **SOME OF THE WORLD'S BIG NUGGETS**

GOLD! There is magic in the word “Gold” to a civilized people. History shows that the desire for it has brought about all the great events on record that have made important changes in the habitations of the civilized peoples on the earth. The first search for the precious metal was that of the Argonauts, the famous Greek heroes who, according to tradition, lived before the Trojan War and acquired fame by an adventurous journey to unknown seas. In the ship Argo they sailed, under the command of Jason in search of the Golden Fleece. This was the first rush of gold hunters on record. They had Hercules, Theseus, Castor, Pollux and Orpheus in the crowd, so it was a mixture of characters, equalling in diversity, the rush to California in '49. The trip was noteworthy, because it was successful, but as to what has become of the Golden Fleece history is silent.



The first mention of gold in the Bible is in the second chapter of Genesis, 11th and 12th verses, where is mentioned the land of Havilah: “where the gold groweth and is good.” This was before the time of Noah. Next we find in Genesis xxiv, where Abraham has sent to Rebecca, jewelry in the form of ear rings and bracelets, showing that jewelry and the Jews are coexistent.

The great science of chemistry owes its first development to the efforts of alchemists to find the secret of nature and make gold. The hieroglyphics of Egypt show that ancient power in its zenith had a revenue 73 equal to thirty million dollars of our money per annum from its gold mines. Savages have no use for gold other than occasional ornamentation. The aborigines of Brazil made fish hooks of gold because they knew nothing about iron and they stand as an exception to the general conditions as regards the use of gold by the American Indians. The Diggers of California gave gold no more consideration than they did the pebbles in the streams. The ancients used gold in quantity, at first, for ornamental purposes only, but as civilization progressed and pockets in clothing came into use, the indestructible, unchanging characteristic and mobility of gold made it of a constantly increasing value as compared with other metals.

It finally displaced the use of iron as money in Greece, where at one time, if a man wanted to pay a grocery bill he had to hitch a yoke of oxen to a chariot and take a ton ingot of iron to make the payment of a small bill.

The people of the world will stop a moment to take notice when a lump of gold is found as large as a man can lift and too heavy to be easily stolen.

The largest nugget on record in the world, previous to 1872, was found in Chili. It was exhibited in London at the World's Fair in the '50s in the Crystal Palace. It was found at considerable depth and carried to the surface on the back of a Chileno miner. It weighed forty-nine hundred ounces or a little over four hundred and eight pounds, Troy, and was valued at over \$88,000.

Australia had second honors, until 1872, in size, but has always had first place in the number and value of the large nuggets discovered in the world.

The largest nugget found in the world, of which there is a record, was one unearthed by two miners named Ryer and Haultmus at Hill End, New South Wales, Australia, on May 10, 1872. The finders were 74 in debt for the grub they were eating at the time and they were raised from poverty to wealth by the stroke of a pick. It was four feet, nine inches long; three feet, two inches wide, but only four inches thick. It was like a big gold slab. It weighed six hundred and forty pounds and was valued at \$148,800.

The “Sarah Sands” nugget, named in honor of the ship its finder came to Australia in, was found in the Ballarat, Victoria placers of Australia, in 1859. It weighed two thousand six hundred and eighty-eight ounces or two hundred and twenty-four pounds, Troy, although another account claims two hundred and thirty-three pounds for it. It was valued at \$52,000.

A nugget was found in the Ballarat district, Australia, on June 9, 1859, that weighed two thousand two hundred and seventeen ounces or nearly one hundred and eighty-five pounds, Troy, and was named “The Welcome.” It was found at a depth of one hundred and eighty feet and was valued at \$44,356. It was raffled for \$50,000 at \$5 a chance and was won by a young boy, who worked in a barber shop. Another nugget with a similar history and named “The Welcome Stranger” was found on February 9, 1869, in Mount Moligell district, Australia. It weighed one hundred and ninety pounds, Troy, and was valued at \$45,000. It was raffled for \$46,000 at \$5 a chance and was won by a driver of a bakery wagon.

The “Blanche Barkley” nugget was found in Kingowa, Victoria, Australia, in 1855. Being one of the first large nuggets found it had the greatest renown. It weighed one hundred and forty-six pounds, Troy, and was given a value of \$34,000. It was taken to London, caressed by Queen Victoria and finally melted there.

The “Precious” nugget was found in Berlin, Victoria, Australia, and weighed a little more than one hundred and thirty-five pounds, Troy. It was valued at \$35,000.

A nugget named “The Leg of Mutton,” on account of it, in shape, resembling that object, was found on January 31, 1852, in Ballarat district and weighed one hundred and thirty-five pounds, Troy, and was valued at \$31,000.

The “Lady Hotham” nugget, weighed ninety-eight pounds and ten ounces, Troy, and was valued at \$23,000. It was found on September 8, 1854.

The “Viscount Canterbury” weighing ninety-two pounds, Troy, and the “Viscountess Canterbury” weighing nearly sixty-four pounds, Troy, were found in the same district as the “Precious,” and they were named in honor of their Lordships who were conspicuous personages at that time. Together these nuggets had a value of \$48,000.

In 1851, in New South Wales, Australia, on a stream named Louisa Creek, the first large mass of quartz and gold was found. Its glint had been noticed by a native lad before the discovery of gold, by white men, made it known to the boy that the yellow glitter was from a thing of value. It was taken out of the creek in three pieces. It was either so broken when being removed or had been so fractured when it fell into its resting place in the bed of the stream. It contained twelve hundred and seventy-two ounces or one hundred and six pounds, Troy, of gold, and was valued at \$24,000.

In 1858 a mass of quartz and gold was found at Burrondong, near Orange, in New South Wales, Australia, that yielded eleven hundred and eighty-two ounces when melted or ninety-eight and one-half pounds, Troy, of gold and was valued at \$22,600.

A number of other nuggets were found that were considered of sufficient size to be given names to distinguish them by, among the largest of which are:

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The “Kohinoor” weighing sixty-nine pounds, valued at \$16,000 and found July 27, 1860.

The “Kum Ton” weighing nearly sixty pounds and valued at \$14,000.

The “Canadian Gully” found in Ballarat district, January 23, 1853, weighed eighty-four pounds and three ounces and was valued at \$19,000.

A large number weighing less than fifty pounds are on record.

The only other large nugget found outside of California, besides those mentioned as being on record, is the one called “The Ural.” It is in the Museum at St. Petersburg and belongs to the Czar of Russia. It was found in 1842 at Misak, Russia. It weighs eleven hundred and fifty-two ounces or ninety-six pounds, Troy. Its assayed value per ounce is not given, but assuming it to be \$18 an ounce, its value is \$20,736.

### **SOME OF CALIFORNIA'S BIG NUGGETS**

No official record was ever kept of the big nuggets found in California during the placer mining era.

They were not named after notables or incidents by their finders as was done in Australia. Hundreds of nuggets weighing from five to fifty pounds and enriching their lucky finders beyond their fondest dreams of wealth were unearthed during the '50s and have left no record behind them. They may have been a subject of local gossip for a transient period and then the recollection of them passed away with the nomadic miners who found them.

Many were found by the Chinese, French and other foreign miners, who quickly hid their find away and went home with it to the foreign land from whence they came.

Another confusing factor is the misuse of the word “nugget.”

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The word is derived from a mispronunciation of the word “ingot” and means a piece of free gold. The word “nugget”, during the '50s, is used indiscriminately to describe any large mass of gold and quartz, consequently, unless a find is followed to the assay office or the mint, its actual value is undetermined.

It is doubtful if a real large nugget, that is a piece of gold free from quartz and one that will compare with those found in Australia, has been found in California. But, for the purpose of comparison, we will call a mass of gold and quartz with the metal in excess, a nugget; where the metal and the quartz are about equal, it will be termed a lump, and when the quartz is in excess it will be named a boulder. When it comes to quartz boulders carrying a treasure in gold, California holds The Blue Ribbon.

The placer mining belt of California extends from the Klamath River on the north to the Kern River on the south. It is about four hundred miles long and thirty to forty miles wide. It extends along the western slope of the Sierra Nevada mountains and generally not within 2000 feet of the average summit altitude of 7000 feet. One view of its formation is that gold was thrown up by volcanic action through the fissures in the rock; another is, that the earth was rent into fissures by a violent internal force and quartz and gold in liquid form rushed up and was deposited and became solid in the same manner as mineral springs now leave their deposits in the fissures they flow upward in. The gold found in the Kern River section is about half silver while that in Butte and Sierra counties has a fineness of 990. The largest nuggets were found in Sierra, Tuolumne and Calaveras counties. An ounce of gold averages in value \$17.75, and a pound, Troy, at this value, is worth \$213.

What few records we can find of large nuggets are those that have been mentioned in the local papers or 78 were made the subject of an item by some newspaper contributor; and, in many cases the record is misleading, as well as incomplete, as regards details.

The first nugget of attractive size that was found in California, was that picked up by a young soldier who belonged to the famous Stevenson Regiment, which happened to be in California when gold was discovered and gained its renown from the circumstance.

This soldier, in 1848, was riding along the Mokelumne River at a point believed to be now in Calaveras County, when he dismounted from his horse to obtain a drink of water and stepped upon a nugget of gold weighing twenty-four pounds and worth over \$5000. He took his find to Col. R. B. Mason, then acting Military Governor of California, at Monterey, for safe keeping and this nugget

cut nearly as important a feature in creating the rush of '49 as did Marshall's find of the first nugget. Col. E. F. Beale had been sent to Washington, D. C., with a few ounces of gold dust to report to the Administration the discovery of gold in California. His report received but little concern nor did it enthuse the people elsewhere as might have been expected.

To confirm the statements, 'which he surmised would be considered exaggerated, Col. Mason sent the soldier's nugget to Col. Beale and when he placed it on exhibition in Washington and afterwards in New York, the gold fever broke out.

A second nugget was found in Tuolumne County in 1849 or '50, by a Frenchman, that weighed either twenty-eight or thirty-four pounds and was worth nearly \$8000. It is said the finder went crazy over his good luck and could not look at, the nugget without going into a spasm. Fortunately, he had friends who aided in securing for his family in France the wealth of his find.

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The largest nugget claimed to have been found in California is that which a contributor to a San Francisco journal describes in 1890. He states that on August 21, 1856, James Finney, alias "Old Virginia," found near Downieville, Sierra County, a nugget weighing five thousand one hundred and twenty ounces or nearly four hundred and twenty-seven pounds, Troy. It was sold to Decker and Jewett, bankers, for \$87,500, although worth over \$90,000. It was sent to the Philadelphia mint and there kept on exhibition several years.

If this statement is true, Finney not only found the largest nugget in California, but the second largest on record in the world.

It would be four hundred and twenty-six pounds and eight ounces in weight and worth \$92,000.

There is a Baron Munchausen pungency hovering over this story which can only be removed by verification. It was not heard of before 1890. Finney was a well known prospector and rendered first aid in uncovering the Comstock Lode in 1858. He died in the early '60s and in his career as a prospector, published after his death, there is no mention of this big nugget finding episode. Again,

it is hardly possible Finney could squander \$87,000 in two years around Downieville and other Sierra mining towns and not leave a red streak of notoriety following him through the rest of his days. We wrote to the superintendent of the U. S. Mint at Philadelphia, Penn., for information and received a reply that he could give no information regarding the nugget. An item in a Grass Valley paper in 1878 evidently mentions the finding of such a nugget, but says it was broken in two when taken out and that the finder is still prospecting for more gold. If it was broken in two it must have been a quartz boulder and as Finney died some fifteen years before this item was published the writer was not fully informed. This 80 statement was disputed by an old settler of Downieville, but, as the statement made in 1890 has not been disputed we have gone thus far in the matter because, as we can neither affirm nor deny, therefore, deem it advisable not to omit mentioning it in all its details.

The next largest nugget claimed to have been found is the one which a miner named John Dodge says he dug out of Castle Ravine, near Downieville, in 1853.

He mined on the North Fork of the Yuba in '51, '52 and '53.

He and his partners kept concealed their find; giving the very plausible reason that, owing to the many highwaymen and frequent stage robberies in that section, at that time, they feared the publicity their find would receive would excite the cupidity of these knights of the road and cause it to be appropriated by them.

It was not until 1858 that Dodge made a statement to a friend detailing the incident, and if his assertions are true, the nugget weighed two hundred and twenty-seven pounds and was worth about \$49,000. His story is a good one, anyway, and is as follows:

“I worked in the summer of 1852 on the Middle Yuba. There I heard of a rich claim on Castle Ravine, one mile above Downieville. Bill Haskins, myself and a Dutchman went quickly to work there and in the summer of '53 we occupied an old cabin that had been deserted and we began working an abandoned claim. We stripped the claim in a different direction from that which it had been worked and came across the lead, containing coarse gold, that I had heard about and we made

for two weeks, from one to three ounces a man, per day. As the ground was getting deeper and heavier to strip, I started a small drift to see how wide the lead was before we went further ahead.

It was on a Saturday about noon. The ground continued to pay and we were down in a soft slate crevice, 81 when I struck into a bright lump of gold that seemed to run into the solid gravel. I tried to pry it out but it was too firmly imbedded in the gravel. Then I worked carefully around it and it appeared to grow larger as I dug the gravel away. We placed the Dutchman on the lookout to see that no one surprised us and, I can say, we were excited. After some time I got it loose and by hard lifting got it out and there it lay, almost pure gold in the shape almost of a large heart. It fitted exactly in the bottom of the crevice. Some quartz attached to it was crystallized, but, would not exceed five pounds in weight. We got it into the cabin as quick as possible and put it into a sack and concealed it under a bunk, intending to examine it more thoroughly at night. We stayed away from Downieville that night and also on Sunday. We brought the nugget out at night to feast our eyes upon it and guessed at its weight. We all thought it would weigh over two hundred pounds. We concluded not to take it to town to weigh it, but divide it in some way there, for if it were known there would be intense excitement. We had gold scales, but they would weigh only up to one and one-half pounds. After some time spent in consultation Haskins suggested a rough pair of original scales. We piled on rock and iron weighed by the gold scales until we got a balance with the nugget. It balanced at two hundred and thirty-one pounds gold weight. We burnt the quartz and thoroughly picked it out with the point of a sheath knife. The nugget then balanced at two hundred and twenty-seven pounds, and it looked more beautiful than ever. If we had taken it to Langton's express office, in Downieville, there would have been the wildest excitement, which we did not want. On Monday we cleaned up the remainder of the crevice and it paid big, but to us now it seemed very small in comparison.

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Now each man had enough. We had at least \$50,000 to divide which was enough to make us all comfortably rich. No doubt we could have made more money exhibiting the nugget but we would



have run a great risk of losing it. We finally came to the conclusion to cut it up into three parts, roll each man's share in his own blankets and start for the Atlantic States on the next Panama steamship.

I went to town on Monday, got a sharp cold chisel to, cut and divide our prize in equal parts.

It took us all night to do it. It seemed like vandalism to destroy the grand precious specimen of Nature's work.

At the first blow on the chisel it sank deep into the yellow metal, it was so soft and yielding. By morning we had made our dividend. We then caved down the bank near the mouth of the drift I had run, took a brief sleep, cooked our breakfast, rolled up our blankets and departed.

After passing Goodyear Hill and Nigger Tent, the rendezvous of the road agents, we breathed easier and arrived in San Francisco in time to catch the Panama steamer for New York where we landed our treasure safely. I have always since then, regretted the way we cut up the grand nugget.”

As John Dodge was working as a teamster in Australia in 1858, it must have been in his case, as with many others, “Riches have Wings.”

The next largest nugget found, and probably the largest that has been found in California, is what is known as the Calaveras nugget.

It was found in November, 1854. Our historians and other writers have written various statements regarding its weight and value. One places it at twenty-three hundred and forty ounces, or one hundred and ninety-five pounds and a value of over \$40,000. <sup>83</sup> Another writer places it at one hundred and sixty pounds and a value of \$33,000, while a third makes it one hundred and forty-one pounds and a value of \$29,000. Fortunately, for historical purposes, we have found the statement of a Stockton journalist who saw the nugget weighed on November 29, 1854, and also we have been able to follow it until disposed of by its original owners. The nugget was found on November 22, 1854, about dusk, fifteen feet below the surface of a claim at Carson Hill, Calaveras County.

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The autobiography of Charles Peters, in 1915 the oldest pioneer living in California, who mined in ... the days of '49 ...; also historical happenings, interesting incidents and illustrations of the old mining towns in the good luck era, the placer mining days of the '50s <http://www.loc.gov/resource/calbk.008>

The claim was being worked by four Americans and one Swiss miner. The nugget was fifteen inches long, nearly six inches wide and of irregular thickness, averaging four inches. Attached to one side and one end were pieces of quartz, but over 80% of the lump was gold. It was weighed on Adams Express Company's scales in Stockton and balanced at twenty-five hundred and seventy-six ounces or two hundred and fourteen pounds and eight ounces, Troy. It was valued at \$17 an ounce and estimated to be worth \$38,000, making due allowance for the quartz attached to it. Now this journalist after making a valuation at Troy weight, published its weight in pounds as one hundred and sixty-one, which is avoirdupois weight.

This is probably where the difference in weight and valuation arises between the various writers.

They have mixed Troy and avoirdupois ounces and pounds.

Mr. Perkins, the principal owner, stated he came to California from Lexington, Ky.; had mined a few years, but, before this streak of good luck came his way, had never had over \$200 in gold dust in his possession at any one time.

The nugget was cased and shipped by the express company to New York, Mr. Perkins and another of the finders accompanying it on the steamer. At some point on their journey they met a citizen of New Orleans 84

STOCKTON, CAL., IN 1850

85 who purchased the nugget from them for \$40,000. It was taken to New Orleans and deposited in the Bank of Louisiana in January, 1855, there to remain until the owner was ready to take it to Paris, to be exhibited at the French Exposition in 1856.

It was carefully assayed in New Orleans and its real value given as \$38,916. At \$17 an ounce this would give a Troy weight of one hundred and ninety and three quarter pounds of gold in the nugget.

As an instance of the capriciousness of luck the experience of Captain J. H. Carson in connection with this big nugget and other finds can be cited. Captain Carson was a sergeant in a New York

regiment stationed at Monterey in 1848. He left there for Coloma shortly after becoming satisfied gold had been discovered.

From Coloma, via Weber Creek, he, in company with a party of Indians and whites, departed for the Mokelumne River. In the party was Angel, who gave his name to Angel's Camp. They finally located on Carson Hill and Carson Creek. These two places were named after the Captain who first found and opened the rich placers existing there.

He was taken ill with rheumatism soon after locating the claims and was disabled for eighteen months. He was able to resume mining after a short time in '51, but was again stricken and died in Stockton in 1853, shortly after being elected to the State Legislature from Calaveras County. He died in straitened circumstances, at a time, when on Carson Hill, was being worked the richest ledge of quartz that had been found in California. The vein was so rich the gold had to be chiseled loose from it and one lump chiseled out weighing one hundred and twelve pounds was valued at \$16,000. Over \$2,000,000 was taken from the Morgan mine in two years time.

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Five hundred miners were working the rich placers of Carson Hill and gathering fortunes through Captain Carson's original discovery, while he was lying ill at Stockton.

The finding of this big nugget and the publicity it received is said to have originated the first gold brick swindle accomplished in this country. Shortly after its discovery was published throughout the East, a man posing as a returned California miner deposited a nugget weighing twenty-three hundred and nineteen ounces or one hundred and ninety-three pounds, Troy, very near the reported weight of the big nugget, in a New York assay office and desired an assay to be made of its value per ounce.

He requested that the assay be made from small particles removed from places on its irregular surface that would not mar its appearance. This was done and showed it to be gold of usual California fineness.

He then appeared to be in a dilemma. Did not know whether to send the nugget to London to be exhibited and sold or forward it to the mint at Philadelphia to be coined. While waiting to make up his mind he obtained a loan of \$6000 from the assayers, leaving the nugget in their care as security. After a time Of waiting the assayers became impatient and then made an investigation that showed the lump was made of lead coated with a heavy covering of gold leaf and a few small nuggets attached worth only a few hundred dollars.

In April, 1855, there was published an account of a shooting affray in Columbia, Tuolumne County, between a number of miners, in which Charles Jarvis, who was acting the role of a peacemaker, was believed to be fatally wounded. Whether this affair had anything to do with bringing him to Poverty Gulch in 87 January, 1857, history does not say, but here he began the New Year, ground-sluicing a bank of earth and washed into view a nugget of gold weighing one hundred and thirty-two pounds and valued at \$28,000.

In the latter part of 1854 Mrs. H. H. Smith, in French Ravine, Sierra County, who, in addition to attending to household duties assisted her husband a few hours daily in mining, washed into view a lump weighing ninety-seven and a half pounds. It was about two-thirds gold and was estimated by Langton and Company, bankers, at Downieville, by whom it was exhibited in January, 1855, to be of nearly \$13,000 in value. During the '50s there was a local character living around Columbia called "Put." He was of the goodnatured class who are too lazy to work and too honest to steal. He preferred to loiter around the saloons, coloring a meerschaum pipe by continual smoking and playing desultory games of bean poker for a small "ante." He managed to eke out a dubious living, but when his funds got extremely low and his credit was gone, he would take an outfit of pick, shovel and pan and go to Wood's Creek, a few miles from town, where he asserted, he owned a claim.

He generally returned in about a week with a supply of gold dust sufficient to meet immediate demands and enable him to resume his loafing habit.

One summer day he was again driven, by necessity, to gather up his mining outfit and hie away to his gulch.

On the third day after his departure he returned to Columbia with a nugget he had found in a mass of boulders, weighing seventy-two pounds and worth \$15,000.

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Without making any fuss over his good luck or endeavoring to attract undue attention, he shipped it by express to San Francisco, departed on the same stage with the nugget and never returned to Columbia.

Oliver Martin was mining near Camp Corona, in Tuolumne County, in 1854. His partner was drowned in the river and he had to perform the painful duty of digging the grave in which to bury his body. While doing this and having the grave nearly dug, he uncovered a nugget weighing one hundred and four pounds worth \$22,270.

In June, 1858, a company of Mexicans was mining a gravel deposit in Salt Spring Valley, Calaveras County, and found lying on the bed rock a wedge-shaped nugget that was twenty inches long, seven inches thick at the largest end, sloping down to half an inch in thickness. It weighed eighty pounds and was valued at \$17,000.

Ira A. Willard, mining on the North Fork of Feather River in August, 1858, unearthed a nugget weighing fifty-four pounds and worth \$11,700.

A company of miners, calling themselves the Eagle Company, working a claim on Oregon Creek in Sierra County, in February, 1856, found a nugget weighing forty-two pounds and worth \$9,000.

Near Sonora in 1852, a miner found a nugget weighing forty-five pounds and worth over \$8,000.

He had a friend, who had through exposure, become afflicted with consumption and was slowly failing. He gave the nugget to his friend to take East and exhibit there, as it was understood the

gold fever had made it profitable to exhibit large nuggets, and 89 thereby attempt to regain his health. He heard from him regularly as he went from place to place and prospered, then suddenly all communications ceased. Some years later he received notice from a banker in New Orleans that his friend had died and the nugget was in the bank's possession subject to his orders.

Near Hornitos, in Mariposa County, in August, 1856, two Chinamen, working in a gulch with a rocker uncovered a nugget that weighed thirty-four pounds and was worth nearly \$7,000. In describing his feelings, one of the Chinamen said: "Me workee tlee week, makee sixee bitee one day. One day him come big splashee. Foy Toy" (good 'luck).

John Ward, mining at Vallecito, Calaveras County, in February, '53, found a nugget weighing forty-five pounds and worth nearly \$9500.

R. Turner, a miner, near Sonora in January, 1855, found a nugget weighing thirty pounds and worth \$6400 and the next week found another weighing six pounds and worth over \$1200.

A miner named Reynolds, working a claim in Holden's Gardens, Sonora, Tuolumne County, in October; 1851, found a nugget weighing twenty-eight pounds and four ounces that was valued at \$6120.

Sailor Diggings on the North Fork of the Yuba, three miles from Downieville, was very rich in nuggets when it was mined by three English sailors in 1851.

The largest nugget found was one weighing thirty-one pounds and many were found weighing from five to twenty pounds each. The sailors kept all the large nuggets they found and went to England with two large canvas bags filled with them.

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They arrived in England at a time when the public mind was filled with the reports of gold discoveries in California and Australia. They began exhibiting, for an admission fee, their nuggets

in the principal cities of the Kingdom and gave many a phlegmatic Englishman an attack of gold fever that sent him sailing away to the gold fields.

The largest ingot known to be cast in California was that produced by the Kellogg and Humbert Assayers in San Francisco, who, in October, 1859, cast a gold bar twelve inches long, five and one-half inches wide and four inches thick, weighing 2251 ounces, or one hundred and eighty-seven pounds, Troy.

It was 915 fine and valued at \$42,581.71.

Of the nugget finds later than the '50s a few good ones are on record. One of the strangest freaks of good luck is that which fell upon a man named Daniel Hill, who was about as near down and out as a man could get to be, according to the statements of those who knew him.

In 1866 he found in Plumas County a nugget weighing about sixty-six pounds for which he received \$14,000. The money remained with him only a few months. He went to San Francisco and squandered it at the rate of \$5000 a month. When broke, he returned to the interior, and one day near Dutch Flat, he stooped down to wash his hands in a pool of water and saw at the bottom a lump of quartz about the size of a child's head, that had a small streak of gold across it.

From this lump he obtained \$12,300. The money did him no more good than the first find and it is said he died a pauper. It is seldom good luck visits a man twice and why should it "waste its fragrance on the desert air" is a mystery unexplainable.

91

J. D. Colgrove at Dutch Flat in 1866 found a nugget weighing twenty-seven pounds and worth \$5760.

In 1871 it is claimed a nugget weighing one hundred and six pounds and two ounces was found on Rattlesnake Creek and another weighing ninety-six pounds was found on Kanaka Creek, Sierra County, but neither the names of the finders nor the value of the nuggets is given.

A beautiful lump was found in a hydraulic mine near Forest City, Sierra County, in August, 1871. The mine was in litigation so it could not be said who were the owners. It was placed in charge of Charles N. Felton, the U. S. Sub-Treasurer in San Francisco. It weighed seventy-seven pounds and its water weight showed fifty-eight and a half pounds of gold in value about \$12,000.

In 1883 the Rainbow Mine in Sierra County, at a depth of two hundred feet, found a slab of quartz and gold that yielded \$20,468. It was part of a pocket from which \$120,000 was obtained.

In July, 1886, it was reported that a company of Chinamen, who were working a claim near Dutch Flat, which they had bought from a banker of that town, named Nichols for \$300, had found a nugget weighing one hundred and twenty-three pounds and worth \$26,000.

Richard Steelman and Philip Hayes mining in Gold Valley, fifteen miles from Sierra City, found in July, 1886, a lump weighing thirty-seven pounds containing thirty-two pounds of gold and worth \$7000.<sup>92</sup> This was the second large lump they had found within a few years. The first was worth \$2200.

## **FREAK SHAPES OF NUGGETS**

B. F. Wardell, mining on the Middle Fork of the American in 1850, found a nugget weighing six pounds, that had a round hole in the center just the size for a candle to fit in it. He used it for several years on his cabin table as a candlestick and when he concluded to sell it the assayer had to remove about half an inch of candle grease from it in order to obtain its correct weight.

In French Ravine, Sierra County, in 1855, a Missourian named Smith, found two nuggets that were called the Siamese Twins.

One weighed fifty pounds and was attached to another that weighed fifteen pounds, by a small band of gold about half an inch in diameter. Unfortunately, as far as their being kept for a curiosity was concerned, they were finally broken apart. Together their value was over \$13,000.

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In 1851 a miner named Chapman found in his claim, on the Middle Fork of the Yuba, a nugget shaped exactly like a horseshoe. It weighed twenty-eight pounds and was worth \$6000.

It was first purchased by Major Jack Stratman, a celebrity of San Francisco, whose mustache was a conspicuous advertising feature when he was in the heyday of his career.

At Corral Flat near Mokelumne Hill, in December, 1853, a nugget was found that was an exact counterpart of the hook on the end of a log chain. It weighed six and one-half pounds and was valued at \$1400.

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In September, 1854, a nugget was found weighing two and one-half pounds, near Coloma, which was declared to be the most beautiful formation of virgin gold ever seen.

It was ten inches long, three inches wide and a quarter of an inch thick and resembled a bunch of fronds of a fern.

In February, 1853, at Curtisville, Tuolumne County, a Mexican company unearthed a lump of quartz and gold weighing seven pounds, four of which was gold, that was spread over one side of the quartz in the shape of a mistletoe branch, showing the twigs and leaves in perfect duplication.

C. F. Holmes in December, 1855, found on the North Fork of the Cosumnes, a nugget four inches long, that was the perfect shape of a small boot. It weighed over one pound and was worth \$240.

A miner named Wiley at Butte City, Amador County; in 1856, found a lump of quartz that had the gold running through it like gossamer lines and was a perfect representation of a spider's golden web. It was spoken of as a remarkably beautiful specimen.

The gold taken from several bars on the Mokelumne River resembled cucumber and pumpkin seeds and a bushel measure, filled with these nuggets, would not vary in size and shape any more than such a measure filled with real seeds would.

The cause of gold being in this form has never been satisfactorily explained.

In 1848 a young man named Taylor at Kelsey, eight miles from Coloma, picked up in the bed of a gulch, a red stone about six inches long that was 94 inlaid on the under side with about two pounds of gold.

The work was as perfectly done as though a goldsmith had done it. The contrast in colors made it a rare and beautiful specimen.

A nugget was found at Bald Mountain, near Forest City, that was almost a perfect image of a human being.

It weighed eight ounces.

The legs and feet were there; the left hand had only four fingers and was placed on the breast; the right hand hung down and the head was erect and in such a dignified position, a Cockney, on seeing it, said, it looked to him like an image of the Lord Mayor of London.

A nugget, looking like a cluster of arborescent crystals, was found in August, 1865, in the Grit Claim at Spanish Dry Diggings, in El Dorado County. It weighed eight and a half pounds and was worth about \$1800, but it was such a beautiful specimen of dendrite gold, a Mr. Fricot, living in Grass Valley, paid \$3500 for it and took it to Paris to place on exhibition.

## **A FEW SMALLER NUGGETS AND BIG PAY**

Thousands of nuggets from one to thirty pounds in weight were found during the '50s of which no mention was ever made.

From the few that were we have selected the following to record:

A miner named Stevenson, working in Mariposa Diggings on April 18, 1851, found a nugget weighing fourteen and one-half pounds; the next day one weighing four and one-half pounds and on

the day after that another weighing over three pounds. His claim yielded over twenty-five pounds of gold that week.

## 95

In October, 1851, a miner named Reynolds, found in his claim in Holden's Garden, Sonora, a nugget weighing twenty-eight and one-fourth pounds and worth over \$6000.

A miner named Kelley, in March, 1852, found a nugget weighing seven and one-half pounds in the stage road near Lower Springs, Shasta County.

In April, 1852, W. L. Durham, near Bayecito, Tuolumne County, picked a twenty-five and one-half pound nugget valued at \$5500.

In March, 1852, a couple of miners near Vallecito, Calaveras County, dug out a twenty-eight pound nugget worth over \$6000.

In June, 1852, a miner called "Ben the Boatman," tried to sell his claim for \$75 at Whiskey Creek, on the Yuba River. Being unsuccessful, he began to work it himself and dug out an eighteen-pound nugget.

In August, 1852, Geo. Van Brunt, mining near Downieville, found a fifteen-pound nugget and took out \$4000 in one day.

A miner, working in Mad Ox Canyon in Shasta County, in October, '52, found a nine and one-half pound nugget and a four-pound nugget during the same week.

In April, 1853, a miner named Weems, in Indian Gulch, Tuolumne County, found a seven and three-quarter pound nugget and the next day one weighing nine pounds both valued at \$3800.

## 96

In May, 1853, a miner named Clark in Tehama Ravine, Shasta County, uncovered a nugget weighing fourteen pounds and two hours later another weighing four pounds, making nearly \$4000 for his day's work.

On June 10, '53, a miner named Gilman in Pacayune Gulch, near Mokelumne Hill, found a sixteen-pound nugget worth \$3300.

Two good little boys attending a Sunday School picnic at the head of Algerine Gulch, near Sonora, on May 2, '54, while throwing stones at some birds, picked up a nugget weighing one and one-half pounds and worth over \$300.

“Uncle Joe” Sweigart at Rough and Ready in June, '54, found an eighteen-pound nugget.

An Italian miner in Three Pines Gulch near Columbia, picked up a nugget weighing twenty-three pounds worth \$4800 in May, 1854.

Frank Cook went to Kanaka Creek, broke, in April, 1855. He took up a claim and worked clearing off the top dirt until May 18th, when he made his first washing. There was one nugget weighing twenty pounds and another worth over \$200 in his clean up.

In September, 1856, a miner named Brown, found a nugget weighing sixteen pounds in French Gulch, Shasta County.

Cress brothers, mining in Big Canyon near Diamond Springs in March, '57, found a twenty-four-pound nugget that was valued at over \$4800.

97

A lump of gold quartz weighing seventeen pounds was found near Columbia on Christmas Day, '53, that was worth \$1700.

Many a pocket and crevice were uncovered during the '50s from which gold was scooped in handfuls and panfuls. Among those reported were these:

Three tipsy sailors in September, 1850, made their appearance on Murderer's Bar on the American River, and while they knew how to weigh an anchor they did not know how to weigh an ounce of gold. They began to mine with pick and pan and on the first day took out twenty-Dine pounds of gold. They worked their claim a little over one month and then went back to San Francisco with over five hundred pounds of gold valued at \$105,000.

In April, 1851, Gregorie Contreras and his partner took their horn spoons and bateas to Sullivan's Gulch near Sonora, and inside of twenty-four hours washed out a nugget weighing eight pounds, and enough chispas to make a yield of twenty-eight pounds, worth \$5700 from a hole four feet square.

Dr. Gillette on his way to Mokelumne Hill, while resting in the shade of a tree at noon in May, 1851, carelessly struck his pick in the ground and turned into view a two-pound nugget. He and a companion dug out fourteen pounds of gold from that spot during the afternoon.

In October, 1851, two negro brothers worked a claim at Mokelumne Hill, and cleaned up in four weeks over \$80,000 which they took East with them.

98

In January, 1852, three miners working on Missouri Bar on the American River, washed out in three days with a rocker gold to the value of \$4650.

Ten miners working a river claim on the Stanislaus at the mouth of Jackass Gulch, Tuolumne County, toe out seven and one-half pounds of gold in two hours in September, '52. One bucket of gravel yielded \$350. They had found a rich crevice that extended entirely across the river bed.

In January, 1852, the miners of Volcano, Amador County, cleaned up \$150,000 and shipped it to San Francisco in a wagon guarded by nine men.

A miner named Perry, working on Park's Bar on the Yuba in October, '52, took out in one day eighty-six pounds of gold, worth \$18,300.

Five sailors working a claim at Gold Bluff, near Downieville, in October, '52, cleaned up twenty-six pounds of gold in one afternoon.

Four miners had a claim on Douglas Flat, near Murphy's and sold it February, '53, for \$3000. They had taken out five hundred pounds of gold in seven months and left for the East.

H. C. Carpenter on September 9, '53, took out from under Stockton Hill, near Mokelumne Hill, six pounds of gold worth \$1200.

A negro mining in Indian Gulch, near Columbia in October, '53, panned out in two days seven and one-half pounds of gold worth \$1521.

99

The Alleghany Company, on Texas Bar on the Yuba in October, '53, took out in three days thirty-six pounds of gold worth over \$7600.

On Randolph Hill, near Grass Valley, \$2650 was washed out on October 17, '53, some of the nuggets weighed two pounds.

Caldwell's Garden, near Columbia, was a famous rich placer in the '50s.

In December, '54, four miners struck dirt that paid twenty ounces to the pan. They took out \$4000 in two days and then sold their claim for \$5000.

In January, '55, this claim yielded seventeen pounds of gold in one day.

In March, '56, this claim was reported as having paid \$15,250 in fifteen days, and in 1858, the Gardens made a record of \$100,000 in four months.

Walton & Company took out \$10,000 in one day at Snow Point near Grass Valley in January, '55.

The Red Tunnel Company, at City of Six, Sierra County, took out ten and a half pounds in three days in February, '55.

Norris and McFadden, mining under Stockton Hill, near Mokelumne Hill, on February 18, '55, took out thirty-two pounds of gold. They obtained \$28,000 in the next three months. Woolzy and partner on Jackass Gulch took Out \$15,000 in three months in '55, and Martin & Company, 100 mining on Stewart's Hill, Calaveras County, found \$8000 on May 10, '55.

Page & Company on Rattlesnake Bar, Placer County, in May, '55, took out in one day seven pounds and a miner named Armstead, nearby, took out six pounds.

Ryan at Eureka, Sierra County, cleaned up sixteen and a half pounds from three days' work in May, '55.

A company of Chinamen, mining on the American River in Placer County, took out \$20,000 in one week in June, 1855.

The Wisconsin Tunnel Company, at Iowa Hill, using a rocker, washed out six and one-quarter pounds of gold on April 3, '55.

Dan Stevens, at Downieville, took out in one day in April, '55, five and one-quarter pounds of gold.

Four miners, working on Douglas Flat, on October 17, '55, took out one hundred and thirty pounds of gold valued at \$27,600.

The American Star Company, on Negro Hill, Sierra County, took out thirty-three and a half pounds of gold in one week, during December, '55.

The January Claim on Iowa Hill on December 7, '55, washed out thirty-five pounds of gold valued at \$7250.

Michael Talbot, in Sherlock Gulch, Mariposa County, in December, '55, took out \$3200 in two days.

## 101

In December, 1855, Bowan & Bond took out five pounds of gold in five hours and a company of Frenchmen, working in the Tuolumne River, found a crevice and took out \$3500. On the next day they had to quit work on account of the riffles in their sluices becoming clogged with gold and they could hold no more. What this last clean up amounted to, cannot be conjectured.

A company, working under Table Mountain, Tuolumne County, took out seventeen pounds of gold in February, '56.

A Chinaman, working alone with a rocker near Oroville in February, '56, washed out \$674 in one day.

Twenty-one miners left Shasta in April, '56, for the east, taking \$141,000 worth of gold dust with them. They had shipped more than that “home” during the few years spent in California.

Four men on Scott River, Siskiyou County, took out thirteen and one-half pounds of gold in one week in August, '56. At Butte City, Amador County, in January, '57, Dr. Harris, with two partners, took out \$8000 in one day and \$5000 on the next.

An Italian company, working on Brown's Flat, Tuolumne County, in January, '57, found \$12,000 in four days and took out \$18,000 more during the month.

Big yields were reported in April, '57, from the hydraulic mines on Smith's Flat, Sierra County. The Knickerbocker Company washed out eighty-four pounds; the Alleghany Company, one hundred and 102 twenty pounds, and the Pacific Company, seventy-five pounds.

On Sucker Creek near Yreka, four miners washed out \$75,000 in one week in April, '57.



The Monumental Company, at Forest City, took out one hundred and thirty-five pounds of gold worth \$28,000 in April, '57.

During 1858 the five principal gold dust buyers of Placerville bought 6,626 pounds of gold produced by the placer miners in that vicinity. They paid to the miners \$1,431,244. Other buyers bought probably half a million more so that about four tons of gold was washed out and \$2,000,000 obtained during the year.

The Dunning Claim, on a buried channel on an ancient river bed near San Andreas, cleaned up forty-two and a half pounds of gold in January, '59. The dirt was a cement which had to be exposed to the air for some time before washing. More than thirty companies were sinking to strike this old channel.

Corcoran and Forest, at San Andreas in July, '59, struck a crevice and from two pans of dirt obtained two and a half pounds of gold. Several ounce pieces were found. The crevice yielded over \$1000 in one day.

At Mugginsville, McGillicuddy Bros. in May, '59, took out \$3000 in one day. One nugget weighed four pounds.

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Philip Arnold and one man mining on Willow Creek near Galena Hill, washed \$22,500 in ninety days in May, '59. One day \$1600 was gathered in.

Hess & Company, at Brownsville, El Dorado County, ground sluiced their claim in October, '59, for twenty days and cleaned up thirty-seven pounds of gold worth \$8177.

J. Howell and the Linn Bros., working a quarter of a mile from Mariposa, struck a pocket in August, '59, from which they took \$30,000 in one day. An editor said: "The sight of this gold makes us sick of editing a one-horse paper in a one-horse town surrounded by a lot of one-horse Politicians."

With the advent of the '60s there was a decided change in the character of the press items from the placer mining counties.

The development of deep mining, hydraulicking, introduction of machinery, formation of large companies and their capitalization was causing a great change. There were more items detailing accidents to miners employed by companies than of good luck finds and strikes of individuals.

The Pioneers of the “fall of '49 and spring of '50” now began to mourn the departure of the good old times.

### **GOOD LUCK IN QUARTZ BOULDERS**

Full many a boulder, moss covered and gold lined, The deep ravines and rocky gulches bear; Full many a weary miner, will, unsearching, find, The gold, Good Luck, is bidding there.

To the fact that many quartz boulders, seamed with gold, were broken away from their mother ledges and 104 scattered by glaciers, slides and floods, throughout the placer districts, was due many Good Luck finds. These quartz boulders were at first given slight attention. They were regarded by many of the first miners, as obstructions and were moved aside, with other boulders, without giving them any inspection or concern. But, when, with the knowledge gained by experience it became known that full many a lump of gold these silicated masses concealed, they received the close inspection their possible value deserved.

Many a miner found unexpected wealth in the quartz boulders that some ignorant and careless miner had previously handled and moved aside as a thing of no value.

The first quartz boulder, seamed with gold, that yielded a treasure to its finder, of which there is a record, is one found by Wm. Gulnac, in Wood's Creek, Tuolumne County, in 1848. He had only been in the country a few weeks when he unexpectedly landed it. It weighed one hundred and fifty pounds and yielded seventy-five pounds of gold worth nearly \$16,000.

The largest detached gold-bearing quartz boulder found in California was unearthed in December, 1855, in a drift claim being worked by Fennely and Cody at Minnesota, Sierra County. It was fifteen feet and six inches long, ten feet wide and eight feet and six inches thick; about half as large as an ordinary box car. It was estimated to weigh eighty tons. When it appeared in the drift the miners first went over it, then around it, before they ascertained it was rich in gold. They had cursed their luck on account of it being in their way. Pieces broken off its uneven surface, amounting in weight to about one thousand pounds, yielded thirteen pounds of gold, worth over \$2700 The boulder had to be carefully blasted, in order to remove it, and was estimated to contain all the way 105 from \$20,000 to \$100,000 worth of gold. We are unable to ascertain what it did yield.

This Minnesota Mining District in Sierra County, near Alleghany, and between Kanaka Creek and the Middle Fork of the Yuba River, was a place prolific with these rich quartz boulders.

In February, 1857, the Juanita Company rolled one out of their mine that weighed one hundred and sixty-two pounds and was found to contain thirty-five pounds of gold, worth over \$7000. Near the center of this boulder was found a lump of solid gold weighing over two pounds. The boulder was round and smooth showing it had been rolled and submerged a long time before it had a resting place in the ancient river bed where it was found lying.

Another quartz boulder found there a short time afterward, but not so large, yielded \$5300 worth of gold and a third came in view during '57 that held a treasure of \$1400. In April, 1857, the Wisconsin Company, nearby, found a quartz boulder that yielded \$5349.

In the Blue Tunnel Company, in this district, in May, 1854, a miner was running a car of dirt out, when it jumped the scantling railroad track and struck against a quartz boulder sticking a few inches out of the side of the tunnel. The collision of the car with the boulder broke a piece of it off and disclosed the gold it contained. It yielded \$1400.

Starling and Company, ground sluicing on Coyote Gulch, near Vallecito, in May, 1854, washed out a quartz boulder, weighing thirty pounds, which contained twenty-two pounds of gold worth \$4700.

Two Mexicans, coyoting in the bank a year before, had tunneled two feet below it and consequently, missed the chunk by a few inches. This gulch was 106 quite prolific with large nuggets. In '52 one of twenty-six pounds and in '53 a number weighing fortyfive, eleven, ten, six and three and a half pounds were found.

Down in Mariposa, in February, 1854, after a heavy downpour of rain, a negro named Duff and a German lad called Fritz entered into a mining partnership and went out prospecting in a gulch about a half mile from the town. During the afternoon Duff seated himself to take a rest on a quartz boulder standing partly out of the ground. While seated upon it, he glanced down and saw the gleam of a narrow streak of gold beneath a part of its uneven surface. They pried it out and had a prize in a boulder weighing one hundred and ninety-three pounds, from which was taken thirty-seven pounds of gold worth \$7600.

In 1851, a miner named Strain was walking up a trail from a gulch about a half mile from Columbia, Tuolumne County. In the trail, about half way up the hill, was a slab-shaped boulder of quartz, fourteen inches long and nine inches wide, upon and over which hundreds of miners had stepped during the years the trail had been made and used. Curiosity, to see how deep the quartz boulder set in the ground, prompted Strain, with his pick to move it out, and on turning it over he found it was about as thick as it was wide, 'weighed about fifty pounds and was streaked with gold On its under side. The boulder was pounded up in a hand mortar and yielded \$8500. There was no quartz ledge in the vicinity that it could have been broken from and from whence it came and how it was moved there remained a mystery.

Tadpole Creek in Shasta County was a busy scene of mining operations in 1850 and was carelessly and 107 hurriedly worked by the placer miners of that early period.

In 1856 a company began reworking portions of the creek and in doing so moved a pile of tailings deposited by the miners of 1850. Amongst the rocks and boulders of this pile was found a quartz boulder about the size of a man's head weighing nineteen pounds which had been handled several

different times before it was discovered to contain gold. It yielded seven pounds of gold worth \$1500.

In 1857 some Frenchmen, mining in French Gulch, Shasta County, found a mass of quartz weighing three hundred pounds. Throughout was spread seams of gold in such a peculiar and even manner that it was decided to cut it into equal parts with a bucksaw and give each man his share without delay. One of their number was selected to do the dividing and the sawing. He was allowed to keep the golden sawdust that dropped from the boulder as his pay for his trouble. He realized \$150 from it. It was never known what the value of this boulder was, as most of the Frenchmen sent their portions direct to France.

E. H. Virgil, working a claim with a partner named West in French Gulch near Columbia, Tuolumne County, in 1857, sold it to go to Fraser River in British Columbia, following the rush that went from California to that excitement.

They afterwards returned and bought back the claim. While working on the bedrock a few weeks afterwards and wielding a pick. Virgil felt the point strike something hard which caused him to investigate. He disclosed a part of a lump of gold attached to a quartz boulder. He tried to raise it but it was too heavy and in his excitement he had little strength anyway. He called to his partner, West, and while 108 he, too, had an excitement weakness, they finally released the find and had it lying before them. The good luck alarm spread and miners from adjacent claims gathered to view the discovery. Finally a procession was formed and they all escorted Virgil to the express office where he deposited his boulder. It weighed ninety-eight pounds, was over half gold and Virgil received \$11,750 for it.

Two men named Dayton and Buckmier, with two partners, had been mining near Pilot Hill for several months during 1857 and had made little more than expenses. The two partners, in 'a feeling Of disgust, sold out for three hundred dollars apiece and quit. Two days after they left the two owners had to remove a large quartz boulder that had laid in their claim for some time and was now in the way of operations. On account of its size, they had put off its removal as long as possible. It

weighed over half a ton. In an attempt to pry it over with a crowbar a piece weighing about seventy-five pounds was broken off and disclosed the fact the boulder was composed of quartz and gold. \$1750 was obtained from the seventy-five pound piece and the whole boulder yielded over \$15,000.

In July, 1858, at Stewart's Flat, in Placer County, a company composed of six men who came from Ohio and called themselves "The Buckeye Company," were working adjacent to a quartz ledge which projected 'out of the side of the hill above their claim. One day they dislodged a large boulder from it which rolled down and broke into a number of pieces, revealing the gold concealed within it. They got \$8000 out of the mass.

In the summer of 1856 several miners were working with varying success a placer claim in El Dorado 108 County. The returns finally became so discouraging they were about to move away and find better diggings. While laying down his tools to go to his dinner at the cabin one day, one of the men looked down at a quartz boulder lying on the bedrock at his feet and struck it a vicious blow with his pick to vent his grouchy feelings on the inanimate rock. The pick point broke it in two. Streaks of gold were shown across the fractured sides and it was pounded up in a hand mortar, yielding twenty-five pounds of gold worth over \$5000.

Down in Mariposa, during the '50s there was a miner named Wm. Blixan, who made a specialty of hunting for quartz boulders and so successful was he that he gained the sobriquet of "Boulder Bill." Like the hunters of big game "Boulder Bill" would disappear for a time from around the town and then reappear like a hunter with bear meat with the object of his hunt ready for disposal to the gold dust buyer. Boulders yielding \$1000 and, more, were frequently found by him and small finds of a few hundred dollars in value were so numerous as not to be considered worth mentioning. During 1858 he found four quartz boulders of unusual size and richness; one that weighed two hundred and forty pounds, contained four and a half pounds of gold yielding him nearly \$1000 and the others gave him a couple of thousand dollars more.

In February, '58, a citizen of Mariposa, named Nichols, found in his back yard a quartz boulder weighing fifty pounds that contained \$2000 in gold. A quartz boulder forty-two pounds in weight

was 'found five hundred feet below the surface in the Jenny Lind Mine in Placer County in February, '58, and was worn smooth by erosion of water and contact. It yielded twelve and a half Pounds of gold valued at \$2600.

In May, 1858, a miner named Stewart, at Moore's Flat in Nevada County, found in his claim a quartz boulder that weighed one hundred and seventy-five pounds. On reaching over to grasp it, so as to roll it out of the way, he took hold of 'a piece of gold projecting several inches from its surface and his surprise can be imagined when he saw what he had hold of. This lump of gold, when broken away from the quartz, was worth over \$1000. The boulder yielded \$4060.

A quartz boulder found at Forest Hill, Placer County, in May, '58, weighing forty-four pounds, was over half gold and was valued at \$5000. It was placed on exhibition at the Forrest Theater in Sacramento at twenty-five cents a peep.

A quartz boulder found near Columbia in May, '59, was bought by W. O. Sleeper who crushed and melted it. It weighed thirty-seven pounds and he obtained twenty-nine pounds of gold from it worth \$6750.

In 1859, Jerry Green and his brother were working a claim at Remington Hill, Nevada County. They had a gang of men employed and were developing on a large scale. Part of a quartz boulder was found that was oval in shape, very like an immense egg. It had been broken in two near the middle. The fractured end was worn smooth by the action of water which indicated that the parts had separated many years previous, therefore, when the missing part was not immediately found, it was not considered strange. Instructions were given to all hands to watch carefully for the missing part as work progressed. The part found contained eighteen pounds of gold worth \$4000 and it was expected that the missing part was a prize equally as valuable. A week passed without the missing part being found. At this time an old miner, who had worked for the Green Brothers a long time, announced his intention to quit mining and go to the valley to live on a farm. Incipient rheumatism was given as a reason. Rolling up his blankets one morning he departed. Several hours after he had gone, one of the Greens became suspicious of the old miner's movements and went

after him. He was overtaken several miles away and compelled to unroll his blankets. In the middle of the roll was found the other part of the quartz egg. It yielded fourteen and a half pounds of gold worth over \$3000. The egg-shaped boulder when put together contained thirty-two and a half pounds of gold worth over \$7000.

On August 18, 1869, a quartz boulder was found in the Monumental Mine, near Sierra Buttes, Sierra County, that can probably be classed as a nugget. It originally weighed one hundred and forty pounds, but a few pounds were broken off in getting it out. It weighed, when seen in San Francisco, one hundred and thirty-three pounds, Troy. It is described as being like a rice pudding filled with raisins; it was a lump of quartz filled with nuggets instead, rather than a solid mass.

Wm. A. Farrish and three others were the owners and they sold it to R. B. Woodward, proprietor of Woodward's Gardens, a popular San Francisco resort, who bought it for exhibition purposes and paid \$21,636, its estimated gold value, for it. Subsequently, it was crushed and melted and yielded \$17,654 in gold. Farish has stated that two hundred and fifteen pounds of gold, worth \$46,000, was taken out in one day from this mine.

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In August, 1897, it was reported that two brothers named Graves, working what was called the Blue Jay mine in Trinity County, found a lump of quartz. which had to be broken in pieces to get it out, that contained gold to the value of \$42,000, but this has been shown to be a pocket and not a boulder.

That "all is not gold that glitters," was proven by the experience of a miner on Snake Bar, Shasta County in 1859. He discovered a quartz boulder streaked with yellow veins on the Bar, which he carried to his cabin and it was estimated by himself and a number of experienced miners to contain not less than \$5000 worth of gold. It was so announced in the papers and for several days, while the lucky finder stood guard over his treasure, it created quite a furore in that section. When he finally obtained a hand mortar and prepared to crush and secure the gold in it, a few blows, with a sledge hammer, disclosed it to be only a mass of barren quartz. It had lain a number of years adjacent to



a Chinese gambling house on the Bar and the Chinese gamblers had been using it to brighten their yens--the small brass coins with a hole in the center, which are used in the game of Fan Tan--and this had yellow-streaked the surface of the quartz boulder.

## **GOOD LUCK IN DECOMPOSED QUARTZ SEAMS**

Not one man in ten thousand of those who came to California to mine for gold in the '50s knew there was an affinity between quartz and gold. To ignorance of this fact was due some of the most stupendous streaks of good luck during the placer mining era. To searching for placer deposits or doing something in connection therewith to improve conditions and get better results, was due the accidental uncovering of 113 many of the auriferous veins of the decomposed quartz seams found. These treasure deposits were narrow, shallow, ribbon-like seams, not of great length but of great richness. When near a well-defined quartz ledge, they were called stringers, but they were oftener discovered in the most unexpected places. The quartz, that the seam contained, was by the action of frost in winter, heat in summer, air and water so disintegrated, it was called rotten stone, and it hung to the threads of gold in such a manner that it could be easily separated from the metal. Evidently, the silicified mass, impregnated with liquid gold, was forced up by the internal forces of the earth, filled the fissure and then became solidified countless ages ago. Its disintegration had slowly progressed until now its hidden treasure was ready for the hand of the miner to grasp.

One of the first men to stumble upon a fortune from this source was a young man named Jenkins who was mining, in the summer of 1851, near the head of Missouri Gulch in Placer County. His claim, high up in the ravine, lacked a sufficient head of water and to obtain the use of all that could be had, he built a small dam across the gulch to hold the water that flowed down at night, for use by day. Noticing a small spring on the hillside near the head of the gulch, the water from which wasted itself in a small marshy fiat and did not reach the gulch at all, he dug a shallow ditch from the spring, along the side of the hill and brought the flow from the spring to his dam.

About ten days after completing the ditch he noticed the water from the spring was not reaching the dam and concluding a gopher hole must have caused the break, he shouldered a shovel and

proceeded along the ditch to investigate. Near the head of the ditch, at the spring, he saw a bright yellow streak along the bottom of the ditch extending for a distance 114 of twenty feet. The glitter came from a decomposed quartz seam about three inches wide, that he had uncovered when he dug the ditch and which the water. from the spring, in washing away the particles of decomposed quartz, had DOW left exposed in full view. In three days he extracted \$41,000. He was doubly lucky in that during the days the vein was visible, none of the numerous prospectors, searching for diggings, had made the find. Not having located a claim on this ground, he could not have maintained an ownership.

Three Frenchmen went to remove a stump from a wagon road that had been laid out on Weber Creek in 1851. As the stump interfered with the delivery. of supplies to their cabin, the removing of it was a duty that was forced upon them. After prying it loose from its roots and turning it over, they found exposed, a seam of decomposed quartz from which they obtained \$5000 in a few hours and as much more before it was exhausted.

Four Dutchmen were reworking an old claim on Jackass Gulch, Tuolumne County in April, 1853. As the ground was paying poorly, they began to sink prospect holes in the bank to find, if possible, where there was better pay. On the 17th, one of the company sank a hole about six feet from their cabin door and uncovered a vein of decomposed quartz. It was a new formation to them and not understanding it they called to a prominent citizen of Sonora, named Colonel Ingersoll, who was strolling by, to come and look at it. He offered them \$400 for a fifth interest in their claim, which they accepted and then under the colonel's direction proceeded to work the seam. One hundred and seventy pounds of gold was extracted within the next week. Colonel Ingersoll, by 115 being in the right place, at the right time, had over \$8000 as his share with more to come.

The season of 1856 was a dry one in California and water for mining purposes became hard to get, especially, for the miners who were working claims in the so-called "Dry Diggings." This was severely the case in the vicinity of Georgetown in El Dorado County. Two young Swedes there had a claim which they were unable to work on account of the water supply failing. They decided to dig a ditch nearly a mile long, along the sides of the hills to where a supply of water could be got and

brought to their claim. After working a week or more, one of them cut across a decomposed quartz seam about one foot below the surface. The first pan of stuff yielded \$120. They took out \$1200 the first day, \$5000 on the second and cleaned up over \$20,000 from the seam.

On Jackson Flat, Tuolumne County in October, 1857, three miners were working a claim, which for over a week, showed indications of petering out.

An animated discussion had been going on between the partners, at intervals, for several days, over the question of what they should do; whether to quit or prospect in some other direction.

One day, at noon, as they quit for the noonday meal, one of the three named Houston, who had his shovel on his shoulder, stopped at a place they had mined over and remarking: "Here is where we got our best pay," pushed his shovel, with his foot, down into the soft bedrock and turned over a chunk. To his astonished gaze, there was revealed, glistening in the hole, a seam of gold an inch wide. He had uncovered a seam of decomposed quartz. They took out \$2500 worth of gold that afternoon and had thousands more in sight.

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In August, 1857, P. H. Pierce, and a partner, located a quartz claim near Oroville. They put up the necessary notices defining the extent of their location but, before doing any work upon the croppings, Pierce received the appointment of a government position in Oregon, and preferring the emoluments of office to the chances of mining, took his departure to the North. His partner did not do any development work and the right to the location lapsed by limitation.

Several months afterward two prospectors from Oroville, passing by, read the notice put up by Pierce and his partner. Changing the date and the names thereon, to fit a location by themselves, they set to work on the croppings to do the necessary amount of work to hold the claim.

Unexpectedly, they uncovered a seam of decomposed quartz, from which on that day they extracted \$7500 worth of gold and obtained over \$25,000 from the vein before it petered out. Spanish Dry Diggings in El Dorado County was a place abounding in decomposed quartz seams. In 1859 a seam

was found that yielded in one day forty-six pounds of gold worth over \$9000. A single pan of the material contained eleven pounds of gold worth \$2300.

Three miners named Rodgers, Barr and Croston located a claim there and on March 2, 1860, found a seam which yielded \$7000. Rodgers came to the conclusion that it had petered and sold his interest to his two partners for \$1000. The next day they either struck the original seam again or uncovered another from which one pan of stuff yielded twenty-seven pounds of gold worth \$6000. They obtained from this one day's work \$11,550. The seam of decomposed quartz was about two inches wide and they followed it for five days, making a drift seven feet long, three 117 feet wide and that deep. From this they took out one hundred and eighty-three pounds of gold, worth \$38,360.

## STRUCK A SEAM

During the summer of 1859, a man named Burns, living in Nevada City, took a stroll along a ditch  
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## “OLD SCOTTY” IN HARD LUCK

119 down Deer Creek. About a mile from town he came to a sluiceway which was used frequently to scour the ditch of slickens. The water from the ditch rushing down the steep hillside to the creek had washed a gully several feet deep down to the bedrock. Across this sluiceway had been placed a board for footmen to walk over the opening on. When Burns stepped upon the board it broke and he had to jump down into the gully to prevent a bad fall. He landed upon his feet, but the slippery bedrock caused his feet to slide from under him and he dropped to a sitting position in the gully. He tried to save himself from falling and getting hurt by grabbing at the sides of the gully with his hands. In doing this he grasped in one hand a piece of decomposed quartz from a small seam extending up the side of the bank. It showed specks of gold. He went back to town and obtaining a pick and a sack returned to the sluiceway. Here, in a few hours he filled his sack with specimens from the narrow vein that yielded over \$2000. The Ditch Company took possession of the find the next day as they were the owners of the land.,

One of the richest decomposed quartz veins struck in the State was that discovered by the Rawhide Ranch Company near Columbia, Tuolumne County in August, 1860. It yielded \$60,000 in three days and thousands afterwards.

“Old Scotty” was a prospector, who, coming from Scotland in '49, had been called after his native heath in every camp he mined from Mariposa to Yreka. He often declared that he and his jackass had found and ate and drank up three fortunes but would always be able to find another. In September, 1859. “Scotty” was prowling through the chaparral of a hill in Trinity County searching for quartz. He 120

#### WEAVERVILLE, CALIFORNIA, IN THE '50'S

121 had left the placer diggings and was now looking for a ledge. Seating himself on a small level spot on the hillside about a hundred feet above the bed of a gulch, he got out his jack-knife, a plug of tobacco and pipe and prepared to have a smoke and a think. Cutting off a few pieces of tobacco from the plug, he stuck the blade of his jack-knife into the ground near his knee and began grinding the pieces of tobacco to a desired fineness between the calloused palms of his hands. He filled his pipe, lit it and had his smoke and his think. When ready to move on he reached for his jack-knife. With its blade he lifted a small clod and saw attached to it a small piece of gold. It was rugged in shape and to “Scotty's” experienced eye, it had not moved far from the vein that once held it. As gold does not climb hills, “Scotty” began & search for the vein above the spot he had been sitting upon. For two days he trenched and carried dirt down into the gulch to wash in the water flowing there, without finding a “color.” Then he again sat down on the spot where he had made his discovery, had a smoke and a think, which 'ended in his taking a sight on a white-colored rock down in the bed of the gulch for a beeline from where he was sitting. With a boot heel making a shallow trench down its side, he slid down to the bottom, leaving behind him a well-defined boot heel mark and the seat of his trousers. He then began to dig and pan the dirt from the bottom of the gulch up the side of the hill. For a distance of about two feet on each side of his boot heel mark the dirt paid big, beyond that, there was nothing. It took him over three months to work the streak and he took out \$48,000. Beyond finding a few small pieces of rotted quartz, nothing was left of the

decomposed quartz seam that once existed there. It had been entirely disintegrated by the elements of nature. “Scotty’s” find was another case of pure Good Luck.

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## ALLISON RANCH QUARTZ MILL IN THE '50S

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## GOOD LUCK IN QUARTZ VEINS

That quartz was the matrix of gold was unknown, at the beginning of placer mining, to almost every man who had never before wielded a pick or panned a shovelful of pay dirt.

It took several years of experience to acquire a knowledge of mineralogy that informed the miner to look at quartz ledges as the place of origin of the gold in the placers. When this knowledge was gradually obtained, then began the following down with deep shafts into the bowels of the earth, the quartz ledges, whose croppings on the surface indicated wealth, and ,the exploring, by tunnels, of the hidden veins in the hills. By these persistent efforts has the development of the great paying quartz ledges of the Coast been ode. The discovery of some of the richest quartz veins and great lodes have been the result of accident following the working of placers by placer miners. Many of these rich mines were passed over and ignored by those who should have been their original discoverers because they did not understand quartz.

In 1852 a miner named Daniels, from Missouri, was in partnership with five young Irishmen working on a bar on Wolf Creek in Nevada County. In shovelling the gravel away from the bedrock, he uncovered a small vein of quartz that extended across the bed of the creek. As the bar was paying well and they knew nothing about quartz, as well as there was no gold visible in the vein, they passed it by and soon forgot it. Three years later, Daniels again uncovered the vein of quartz and more out of curiosity, than expecting to find anything of value, a few hundred pounds of quartz was extracted and given a test. The yield was a surprise. It was so good that the men commenced developing the vein and it resulted in their discovering the famous Allison Ranch mine. It was 124

## GRASS VALLEY, CALIFORNIA, IN THE '50S

125 probably the richest gold-bearing quartz mine ever found in California. It produced for a number of years from \$3000 to \$5000 a day in pure gold and it became the custom for several years for one of the partners, every two weeks, to take to the mint in San Francisco the product of the mine for that length of time amounting to between \$40,000 and \$75,000. The yield for December, 1856, was probably the largest of any single month and it amounted to \$250,000. The mine yielded over \$10,000,000.

A man named Van Ness took a quartz claim on New York Hill, near Grass Valley, in 1855, in payment of an indebtedness amounting to \$40. He allowed it to remain unprospected until 1858, when a miner named White proposed to work it on shares. An agreement was made and he began taking out rock that amounted to one hundred tons in three weeks. When milled it yielded \$10,000 and it was the beginning of the opening of a very rich mine.

In 1859, Street and Soulsby, near Sonora, with six small stamps were taking out \$100 an hour from a quartz vein discovered by them. Seventy-five pounds were taken out in one week. The mine had been yielding \$30,000 a month for some time.

The deepest gold mining shaft in California in March, '58, was that of Hayward & Robinson at Sutter Creek. It was down 315 feet and had a ledge that was paying \$20 a ton to mill.

## GOOD LUCK FOR MEXICANS

The Mexicans, former owners of California and being adjacent, were early in the field in goodly numbers gathering the chispas. With their cousins of Spanish 126 descent from Chili and other South American countries, they were numerous enough, in nearly every mining town, to gain the name of Spanishtown for their resident district. Their Social functions of the fandango order, while not approved by good society of the New England form, were quite attractive to the young men portion of the mining population seeking

## MEXICANS MINING

pleasure, so that mining was not the sole occupation *of* the *senor*. They brought with them and held tenaciously to the methods of Mexican mining, which, required a wooden bowl, called a *batea*, used as a pan, a horn spoon, made from one of the horns of a steer 127 and a short crowbar, sharp pointed at each end. With this outfit they were very efficient placer miners, crevicing in the gulches and on the bedrock of small creeks. They also introduced the *arastre* to crush the rich, partially decomposed quartz, found in surface veins. The *arastre* was composed of a small circular pit, walled with mud and stones, in the center of which, on a pivot, was a pole. To this was attached horizontal arms and fastened to their ends were heavy stones. A mule or mustang moved in a path around the circular pit and furnished the necessary motive power. A few basketsful of quartz, broken into small pieces, thrown in and a supply of water obtained was all that was necessary for a day's crushing. As the animal power moved the, crushing stones, triturating around, the *arastre* operators only had to wait until the quartz was pulverized enough to warrant his washing out the gold in his *batea*. It was 'a simple piece of machinery and process and was believed to get its popularity, with the Mexican miners, from the fact they had an idea the mule did all the work. However, the Mexican never developed into a deep shaft miner or a hydraulicer on a big scale and the California placers would have lasted a thousand years if left to him to wash. He slowly disappeared, like the Chinaman, as a factor in mining as the placers became exhausted. Undoubtedly, many good luck finds were made by these prospectors but the knowledge of them seldom extended beyond the precincts of Spanishtown.

In 1848, shortly after the news of Marshall's discovery reached Southern California, Mr. A. F. Coronel, a prominent don of Los Angeles and Augustin Janssens, a Frenchman, organized a company of about thirty Mexicans, natives and Indians to go on a trading and mining expedition into the northern section of the country. They reached the San Joaquin 128

## A MEXICAN ARASTRE

129 Valley and one afternoon, when near the Stanislaus River, they were met by a band of seven Indians who desired to trade. The Indians were plentifully supplied with *chispas* of the value of



which they seemed to have no definite idea. When they finished bargaining it was dark, and as they departed one of Coronel's men, named Benito Perez, proposed to take a companion and follow them to ascertain where they obtained their gold. Perez was an experienced placer miner and knew that the Indians, from their display of chispas, must have a rich placer to obtain them from. Coronel consented and Perez followed the Indians to their rancheria on the Stanislaus River. Here, the next morning, he found them at work with short, sharp-pointed poles, turning over rocks and getting nuggets out of crevices. Perez joined them, receiving a disgruntled reception, and in a short time gathered, with his knife, three ounces of chispas, with which he returned and reported to Coronel. He moved his party, under the guidance of Perez, to the bar on the Stanislaus River,, which they took possession of and divided into claims for themselves, of course, giving the Indians no share. Coronel, with the aid of two of his own Indians, obtained forty-five ounces of gold that day. A man named Sepulveda found a nugget weighing a pound. Valdes, another of the party, had in his claim a spot where a large rock diverted the current of the stream. At a depth of three feet he found a pocket from which he took out enough gold to fill a receptacle made of a large towel, by tying the ends together, and it was heavy "enough to stagger him to carry. Satisfied with what he had taken out, he turned the pocket over to a Mexican named Soto. Soto worked several days before he cleaned it out and secured fifty-two pounds of gold worth over \$10,000. Coronel, with a Mexican named Tirador, then went to a small bar, a short distance 130

#### LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, IN 1850

131 above this place and divided it into two claims. Tirador, on his claim, near the dividing line, at a depth of four feet, found a pocket of gold at 9 a. m., from which he took horn spoonfuls, one after another, until 4 p. m. when he had piled in a batea as much gold as he could lift and carry. Tired of the work he bade Coronel adios, telling him to help himself to what was left in the hole and went to camp. Coronel's claim had paid only a few ounces so he was glad to take Tirador's place and he worked until too dark to see, lifting gold out of the hole. After Coronel quit, others in the camp, with the aid of improvised lights, worked on the pocket all night, so that when Tirador resumed in the morning the deposit was soon cleaned out. Tirador, then began selling his gold to all who could pay in silver money, at \$2.50 an ounce. Coronel bought seventy-six ounces, all he had silver money

to pay for at that price. With his money, Tirador bought a supply of whiskey, opened a monte game on a blanket and in a few days was back to his 'normal financial condition again.

In November, 1851, three Mexicans prospecting in Bear Valley, south of Sonora, found a rich deposit in a formation hitherto unmet by, them. They took out \$200,000 in one week. Fearing, under the mining rules, they could not hold the claim, they confided in and entered into partnership with four American miners, who had treated them kindly. From a hole twelve feet deep and twenty feet square they took out altogether \$400,000 in twenty days. On November 4th the news of the strike began to spread and soon a rush began. By December 1st over three thousand men, women and children were there and a town of three hundred tents and hastily-constructed houses comprised the settlement that had come into existence within thirty days' time. The hills all around were located as mining claims. Few, however, found the fortunes they sought.

The rich vein which had caused the excitement, pinched and was considered worked out in January, 1852, and abandoned by its owners. In 1862, a company, under a superintendent named McKay, sunk a shaft on this vein and ten feet below where its original owners had quit work, the vein was again struck and found to be as rich as it was above. From three pounds of vein material taken out the day it was found \$98 was obtained.

In February, 1853, three Mexican prospectors found a decomposed quartz deposit near Curtisville, Tuolumne County. They took out sixty pounds of gold, worth \$12,700 in two days. They became anxious about being able to hold their claim and went to Sonora for advice. This resulted in their taking into partnership three Americans. The good luck fell upon Mayor Dodge, Theo. Dodge and Abel Holstead, who went to Curtisville and worked out the golden seam with the Mexicans. They took out on the next day one lump of decomposed quartz, weighing seven pounds, from, which they obtained four pounds of gold., Gold was taken out in pound quantities and about \$109,000 was taken out of the vein.

A female who had an unexpected streak of good luck thrown upon her, was a Mexican woman living on the outskirts of Sonora. Her cabin was located on the side of a hill, above a gulch, in

which was a spring from where she carried water used for household purposes. One evening, while returning from the spring, she slipped and fell. She upset the bucket of water she was carrying. The water rushing down by the side of the trail washed out a small gully. In this, the next morning, she saw exposed to view, 133 by the flow of water from the upset bucket, a nugget weighing seventeen pounds and worth \$3500.

## **GOOD LUCK FOR FRENCHMEN**

In 1851, an ingot of gold weighing one hundred pounds was made in San Francisco. It was sent to Paris and there placed on exhibition. It stirred up great enthusiasm on the part of the French people and many expressed a desire to go to California. Hundreds of Frenchmen visited the American Minister to get information of where California was, how to get there and what the country was like. Many who desired to go were financially unable to do so. The great distance made the expense too great for their finances to bear. A genius connected with the French government reasoned that it would be of incalculable benefit to have a large French colony in the gold fields and he prevailed upon the officials of the government to purchase the ingot, dispose of it by lottery and thereby raise a fund equal to \$100,000 to be used as a revolving fund for emigration purposes. To send as many worthy Frenchmen, as possible, who were poor in purse, but desired to go to California, was his object.

The lottery was a success. Tickets were sold in Belgium, Germany and other European countries. The prize was won by a poor brick mason who lived in Paris and it was valued at \$22,000. Several thousand Frenchmen were assisted by the government to go to California and they made good. It was not intended to send any of the scum of society from France to the new country, but only those who had brain and brawn and who would aid in helping others to do likewise. They were called “L'Ingots.” Some returned to France with wealth, but most of them remained and became prosperous and excellent citizens of the Pacific Coast.

Four of the “L'Ingots” formed a company and bought a claim at Yankee Hill, near Columbia, Tuolumne County in January, 1853, from a miner who got the Australia fever and thought he could find better diggings there. They paid one ounce, or about \$18, 'for the claim with some tools thrown in. In February they opened a cut in the side of a bank that had prospected poorly and had not been otherwise touched. Here they found a nugget weighing twenty pounds and seven ounces worth \$4400 and two days afterward, found another weighing seven and one-half pounds and worth \$1600.

A company of four Frenchmen were working a claim near Cherokee Flat and on New Year's Eve, 1853, they uncovered, three feet below the surface, a decomposed quartz vein that had a seam of gold in the center two inches thick. Owing to the mining laws at that time allowing a citizen of the United States to jump and hold a discovery of this kind from a foreigner, they endeavored to keep the find a secret, and to do so, took into partnership a company of four Italians, who were working a claim a short distance above them. They worked on the seam at eight. Their frequent visits and Sale of gold, at the store, finally awakened curiosity and when, in the latter part of January, they brought in and sold twenty-nine pounds of gold, they were followed by some of the Cherokee Flat miners and discovered. -The usual wild rush followed. The eight foreigners armed themselves with guns, pistols and knives, and while two or three worked the seam, the others stood guard and did not allow any one to come near. The seam was twenty-five feet long, from two to six inches wide and of irregular depth. Many wild stories of its richness were soon afloat, but it seems they took out \$10,000 on one day and the amount extracted was 135 believed to be over \$60,000. The owners were either unable or unwilling to talk English and tell what they actually did take out. These Sons of France and Italy soon departed for their sunny European homes with the fortune they dug in less than sixty days.

“A drunken sailor for luck” was believed to be a truism by many miners during the Placer Mining Era and it had a good foundation to rest upon.

During the “fall of '49 and spring of '50,” a sailor named Clark mined on Sandy Bar on the Mokelumne River and made weekly visits to a store at Mokelumne Hill to indulge in his favorite

beverage, “Old Tom.” He traversed a trail that went over the hills and across the gulches in a tortuous way. At one place it descended into and ascended out of the precipitous sides of a gulch that was popularly known as “Steep Gulch.” Starting for his cabin on the river one Sunday evening more than “three sheets in the wind” he descended into Steep Gulch and there stayed. He was unable, on account of not maintaining his equilibrium, to climb the ascending slope. He struggled in vain for some time, during which he loosened a quantity of earth and rocks. Finally, he dropped exhausted in the bed of the gulch and there slept all night. On awakening the next morning, sobered enough to understand his surroundings, he saw several chispas exposed to view in the dirt his scrambles of the night before had loosened from the bank. Taking out a claspknife he began crevicing and in a few hours found enough nuggets to fill a tin can the size of a quart measure. One piece that he found weighed 3 1/2 pounds. From a claim fourteen feet long and ten feet wide, he took out in a fortnight \$70,000.

Steep Gulch became famed as a Frenchman's treasure box. A small colony of them working on 136  
MOKELUMNE HILL, CAL., IN 1856

137 Middle and Big Bars of the Mokelumne River were the first to hear and take advantage of the sailor's discovery and many of them returned to La Belle. France with the wealth they dug from the banks of the gulch. It was a long remembered event in Mokelumne Hill when the first thirty or forty of them departed for France. A boniface named Leger, gave a big dinner to the Frenchmen about the Hill and the quantity of wine that was drunk and the number of times the Marseillaise was sung was never equalled before nor since. As the stage could not take the number who were going away at one time, the party decided to go to Stockton on horseback, so they selected a captain and bought or borrowed enough horses and mules for each man to have a mount. Amidst great enthusiasm they departed and as quite a number of them had never been astride a horse before, their efforts at mounting and keeping in the saddle were extremely ludicrous. They arrived at Stockton after much mental distress, sore of body and sailed away with about a ton of gold.

Steep Gulch continued to yield for a decade or more before it was finally worked out. In March, 1859, a Chileno mining there found a nugget weighing one and one-half pounds and worth over

\$300, while a company of four Mexicans, in December, 1859, found in a bank of the gulch, a nugget weighing twenty-eight pounds worth over \$6,000, which had escaped the delving of over a thousand other miners who had previously worked in the gulch.

## **GOOD LUCK FOR JEWS**

The descendants of Abraham came to California in large numbers from every part of the globe in the '50s. They do not appear to have done any prospecting; any pioneering; made any discoveries or worked any 138

A JEW PEDDLER OF THE '50S His Four Degrees of Business 1st. Mit a pack on his back 2nd. Mit a horse and wagon 3rd. Mit a store 4th. Mit a bank or bankrupt

139 placers, but they were there with the goods as fast as new channels of trade were opened.

A well known showman of that time was used to often remark, he could easily gauge the prosperity of a mining town by the number of Jewish storekeepers it maintained and the size of its Chinatown.

It is stated that on hearing of a rush to a new mining excitement in the interior, a Jewish merchant 'in San Francisco sent a relative to view the prospect and advise on the proposition of opening a store. A few days afterward he received a telegram from his relative, sent from a telegraph office, the nearest to the new diggings, reading: "Come. It was richness." Such was the way they kept in touch with the movements of the mining population and they were soon on the spot with the necessary goods to feed, clothe and supply the heedless rushers.

Many of the Jews amassed wealth and with their investments and their backing of experienced miners, gave material aid in developing the mining industry of the State. Many more would have gathered wealth had it not been for the frequency that the hastily built business sections of the mining towns were swept away by fire. The names of the Jewish merchants were always amongst those of the heaviest losers.

Numbers of these people soon developed into the most expert gold dust buyers in the State. It was seldom a rogue attempted to fool one of them with bogus dust. They could tell at sight from the color of the gold, its fineness and value per ounce, and besides that, they could invariably name the locality where it had been dug. To this fact was due the following incident: The Iowa Hill express office was robbed one night of a large quantity of gold dust. Officers investigating the robbery were unable to obtain a clew and after a few days' search concluded the 140 robbers had departed and might sell the gold dust elsewhere. Circulars were sent out all over the State giving particulars of the robbery.

A short time after this a communication was received from an El Dorado County gold dust buyer stating that a miner, claiming to be working in a ravine in El Dorado County, was selling small quantities of Iowa Hill gold dust mixed with that he mined in El Dorado County. The buyer knew it was Iowa Hill gold dust from its characteristics and fineness, and at the times he had bought it, he did not know of the robbery. This information led to the robber being traced, located and arrested.

A Jew gold dust buyer in one of the mountain mining towns, from the frequency which stages were being held up and robbed, surmised that it would not be long before the route by which he expressed his sack of gold dust, weekly, to the mint, would receive an unwelcome visit. He, therefore, instead of agreeing to share the heavy expense of sending armed guards with the express, figured out a plan of his own to save himself from loss. He sent to San Francisco for several hundred pounds of lead bars. He held his gold dust shipments back for a month, then melted the quantity over a furnace and made it into a bar. This he incased in melted lead until it made an ingot, when cooled, that weighed over two hundred pounds. He placed it in an oilcloth pouch without any handles or straps. As he anticipated, the stage was stopped by two robbers and the express box rifled, but when it came to this bar, there was loud profanity. It could not be lifted, and as the men of the road had neither tools nor conveyance to handle it, they were compelled to leave it.

The Chinese were early comers. Three arrived in February, 1848, and went to the mining section, and from this beginning, soon after the world heard of the discovery of gold in California, they began coming in hordes, by vessels, from Canton and Hong Kong. As soon as they arrived in San Francisco, they bought a pair of boots and loading their personal effects and took in bundles tied upon the ends of a bamboo pole, they shouldered their burdens and trotted off to the mines. As they all seemed to move to different parts of the mining counties under direction, it was believed that some system of contract labor was bringing them here. One part of that agreement, which was faithfully earned out, was the return of the bones of those dying in California to the Flowery Kingdom. After being buried three years the dead Chinaman was exhumed, his bones scraped, boxed and shipped. It was not long after they began coming before there was a commercial exchange between China and California of live Chinamen, rice and sugar from China with gold and dead Chinamen's bones from California.

A deadly feud appeared to exist between those that came from Canton and those that came from Hong Kong. A number of pitched battles, with several hundred fighters on each side, were fought in different parts of the State, from Mariposa on the south to Weaverville on the north, resulting in the death of quite a few and the wounding of a large number. 'What it was about, "Melican man, no sabee."

The Chinese were usually in companies of ten to thirty and in charge of a boss. They seemed to prefer buying and re-working old diggings rather than finding new. This was probably due to their fear of being disturbed in the possession of ground they did not buy to mine. They took to the rocker method of mining placers like a duck to water, while a line of sluice boxes 142

## CHINESE MINING

143 appeared to be especially adapted to their use. They introduced the Chinese water wheel, also the bailing bucket, attached to ropes and manipulated by two men, to clear holes of water. By the use of these methods, they were able to work placers to bedrock, which the more impatient Caucasian would not tarry with, on account of too much water to contend with.



The “Boss” was developed from a Chinaman who had learned to speak some English and had an education in Chinese. He apparently was not expected to labor hard, but took charge of the clean-ups and transacted the business of the company.

One of the most intelligent and shrewd of these “Bossy Men” was a Chinaman, who called himself Ah Sam and who had a large company of coolies working on Auburn Ravine, near Ophir, in 1856.

In that year a partnership of six Americans, mining on the ravine, was dissolved. They had been mining for several years and occupied a log cabin built on a bank of the ravine. The cabin had a large mud and stone fire place at one end, with bunks arranged along the sides. The bunks were placed on posts about two feet from the ground. The cabin had a ground floor, which, as it frequently wore into small ridges, was made level again by removing the ridges, with a shovel, and the earth so removed was tossed beneath the bunks. On the day of their final departure, Ah Sam appeared at the cabin and proposed to buy it. He offered twenty-five dollars for it with the proviso they go to Ophir and before the justice of the peace there give him a bill of sale. “You give me paper, I pay,” was his ultimatum. As it was like finding money, as these miners had no further use for the cabin, a bargain was struck. The next day, one of the miners having occasion to return to the cabin, found one side of it torn out and half a dozen of Ah Sam's coolies hard at work, removing the ground floor of the cabin to the depth of 144 three or four inches. They were carrying the dirt away in buckets to where a couple of rockers were being worked in the ravine, close by, and under Ah Sam's supervision the dirt was being washed. It then developed what the shrewd Mongolian had in view. It was the universal practice of placer miners to clean their gold dust at night before their fire places by placing it in a blower. This was a shallow piece of V-shaped metal with a rim turned up on three sides and narrowing to an unobstructed end at the other. The gold dust was placed in this blower and then gently shaken and blown upon with the breath to remove the fine particles of sand and dirt that adhered to it. It was thus cleaned before being offered for sale to the buyer. No matter how gently and carefully the cleaner would, blow, there was sure to be some small particles of gold blown off with the sand, and the more careless or vigorous the miner would blow, the more gold dust would be blown out.

Ah Sam had correctly surmised that these miners had left some wealth on the cabin floor and in the dirt tossed under the bunks. That from the many blowings they had made during their several years of placer mining much had been blown out, and he was secure with his bill of sale in the gathering of it in. While it was current belief along the ravine that Ah Sam realized over \$3,000 from his clean-up, he would never acknowledge to over “tlee hundred dollah.”

A reason existed for Ah Sam to persistently lessen the amount of his estimated profit in the fact, as it was afterward learned, that while he was busily engaged looking after his cabin floor investment and had his back turned on his claim in the ravine, two members of his company, working at shovelling into his sluice box line, half a mile distant, uncovered a nugget weighing sixteen pounds and worth about \$3,500. They concealed their find and surreptitiously left with it during the night.

It was not until they had sold the lump in San Francisco and departed for China, that Ah Sam learned of the incident. He burned Chinese candles and punk sticks in front of his cabin door until the next Chinese New Year.

Ah Sam proved himself equal to any emergency during the same year. Owing to the lack of combative qualities in the coolies, they often became victims of highwaymen and robbers, who found that a couple of armed men, meaning business, could easily conquer a score of Chinamen. By tying their tails or queues together, they could place them in a position where they could do no harm and be easily robbed. A Mexican essayed to rob Ah Sam '8 company, and while engaged in tying together with their tails, a number of the Chinamen, Ah Sam appeared and securing the Mexican's gun, captured him. He then had his crowd tie the Mexican's hands and his feet with ropes, then slinging him on a bamboo pole in the same manner they tied and carried a pig, he was hoisted upon the shoulders of two Chinamen and a procession, headed by Ah Sam, started for Auburn about six miles away.

In due time the would-be robber was triumphantly delivered to the sheriff's office in the courthouse. The prisoner was suffering intensely in his tied position, but his groans and moans gained no compassion from Ah Sam.

As the laws of California would not consider the Oath of a Chinaman binding and his evidence could not be accepted in any kind of a case, and in this case there was no other witness besides the Chinamen, there was nothing to be done but let the Mexican go free. He was liberated much against Ah Sam's vociferous “What for ” ” objections.

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AUBURN, CAL., IN THE '50S

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## **GOOD LUCK FOR AN AMERICAN**

All the good luck in the '50s was not enjoyed by the miners. Many business and professional men took advantage of the opportunities offered to them and made fortunes quickly.

One of these successful men was Judge Stephen J. Field, for many years a Justice of the United States Supreme Court and who has written his reminiscences. He arrived in San Francisco on December 28, 1849, without any definite idea of where he would go and what he would do. He says: “Upon landing from the steamer my baggage consisted of two trunks. I could have carried one but not two. I had only \$10 in my pocket and paid \$7 to have my trunks taken to a room in an old adobe building on the west side of Portsmouth Square. This room was 10x8 feet and had a bed in it. Two of my fellow passengers on the steamer engaged it with me for \$35 a week. I slept on the floor and they on the bed. I probably had the best of it. The next morning I started out with \$3 in my pocket. I hunted up a restaurant and ordered the cheapest breakfast I could get. It cost me \$2. A solitary dollar was, therefore, all the money I had, but I was in no way despondent over my financial condition. It was a beautiful day, much like an Indian summer day in the East. News from

the East was eagerly sought from all new comers and newspapers from New York sold for \$1 a piece.

“I had a bundle of them and seeing the price paid for such papers, I gave them to a fellow passenger, telling him he might have half of what he could sell them for. There were sixty-four copies and I received, to my astonishment, the next day, \$32, he having sold them at \$1 apiece. Nearly everything also brought a similar extravagant price. And this reminds me of an experience in chamois skins.

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“Before I left New York, I purchased a lot of stationery and the usual attachments to a writing table, as I intended to practice law in California. The stationer learning that I intended to go to California said I ought to buy some chamois skins in which to wrap the stationery as they would be needed there to make gold dust bags of. Upon his suggestion I bought a dozen skins for \$10. On emptying my trunk at Marysville, these chamois skins were, of course, exhibited, and a gentleman calling at the tent, which I then occupied, asked me what I would take for them. I asked him what he would give and he replied at once, 'An ounce apiece. My astonishment nearly choked me, for an ounce was taken for \$16 and at the mint for \$18 and \$19 in coin. I, of course, sold them and blessed the chamois hunter who brought the chamois 'down and the stationer who sold them to me. The purchaser of the skins made gold dust bags of them and made a profit of two ounces on each skin.

“After taking my breakfast in San Francisco, I noticed a small building in the plaza near which a crowd was gathered. Upon inquiring, I was informed it was the court house. I at once went over to the building and on entering found Judge Almond of the San Francisco District holding what was Court of First Instance. “A case was on trial. To my astonishment I saw two of my fellow passengers, who had landed the night before, sitting on the jury. This seemed so strange I waited until the case was over and then inquired how it happened they were on the jury. They said they had been attracted to the building by the crowd just as I had been, and that while looking on the proceedings the sheriff had summoned them. They informed him they had just arrived, but the sheriff said that it made no difference, nobody had been in the country more than a few months.

They also said they had been 149 paid \$8 each for their services. At this piece of news, I thought of my solitary dollar and wondered if the same good fortune might not happen to me. I lingered in the court room, placing myself near the sheriff in the hope another jury would be called and he would summons me, but no such good luck came.”

He had a promissory note given by J. L. Stevenson, who was getting rich buying gold dust, to collect. It was for \$440 and the colonel paid it, thus putting the judge in necessary funds and this enabled him to rent an office at the corner of Montgomery and Clay streets for \$300 a month, paid in advance. He hung out his shingle as an attorney and in two weeks' time only one client had come in. This was a fellow-passenger who wanted a deed drawn up. The client was charged an ounce for the service, but kicked at the size of the fee and it was reduced one-half. He says he was not discouraged, as the stirring times about him kept him from feeling lonesome. He was then persuaded by an acquaintance to go to Vernon, a new town just coming into existence at the junction of the Sacramento and Feather rivers. He found the town consisted of one house, entirely surrounded by water from a January flood. It was no place for a lawyer. So he decided to go on to Nye's Ranch, near the junction of the Feather and Yuba rivers. He says: “No sooner had the steamboat struck the landing than all the passengers, some forty or fifty in number, as if moved by a common impulse, started for an old adobe building which stood on the bank of the river. It was surrounded by a large number of tents. Judging by the number there must have been a thousand people there. When we reached the adobe and entered the front room we saw a map spread out upon the counter containing the plan of a town called Yubaville.

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“A man behind the counter was calling out: 'Gentlemen, put your names down. Put your names down, all you 'who want lots.' He seemed to address himself to me and I asked him the price. He replied '\$,250 each for 80x160 feet.' I asked: 'But suppose a man put his name down and then don't want the lots, what then?.' His reply was: 'You don't have to take them if you don't want them.' I took him at his word and wrote my name down for sixty-five lots aggregating in price \$16,500.

“This produced a great sensation. To the best of my recollection, I had only \$20 in my pocket. It was at once noised around that a big capitalist from San Francisco was among them to invest in lots in the rising town.

“The consequence was that the promoters and proprietors of the town waited upon me and showered me with attention.”

He then suggested to the owners of the townsite that they organize a town government and elect a magistrate. He was invited to draw up the proper papers. A mass meeting was held and a local government organized. At the meeting, Judge Field announced he would be a candidate for alcalde. The election took place the next day. An, opposition candidate developed and an exciting contest ensued.

The main objection to the judge was his being a newcomer. He had been there only three days, while his opponent had been there six. Judge Field was elected by a majority of nine votes. His first case, on account of not having an office, was tried in the street. It was a dispute over the ownership of a horse. Both men claimed the horse and asked for a decision. After hearing the testimony of each man, 'he decided in favor of the one lie considered owned the horse. Then the man who lost the case spoke up: “But the bridle belongs to me. He don't get the bridle does 151 he?” The judge replied: “No, the bridle is another matter.” Then the owner of the bridle offered to buy the horse from the owner of the animal and a sale was made for \$250.

The buyer then turned to Judge Field and said: “Now, Alcalde, I want you to draw me a bill of sale for this horse that will stick.” It was done and Judge Field charged each man an ounce to pay for trying the case and drawing up the bill of sale.

On the evening of the election, there was a gathering of people to get the result at the adobe house and on its being announced, somebody proposed that the town should be properly named. One man proposed “Yubafield;” another said, “Yubaville;” a third suggested “Circumdoro” (meaning surrounded by gold), but a fourth man, who was a substantial and solid-looking citizen in his

prime and who had come to California to better his fortune, but still retained that feeling of gallantry toward the ladies that goes with the admirer of the fair sex, arose and stated that there was an American lady in the town, the wife of one of the proprietors. Her name was Mary, and in his opinion her name ought to be given to the town and in her honor he proposed the name of "Marysville." The suggestion was received with a whoop and loud hurrahs and it was so christened then and there. The lady was Mrs. Mary Covilland. She and her husband came to California in 1846 with the Donner party.

Within ninety days Judge Field had paid for his lots; had \$14,000 in gold dust in his safe and still owned enough real estate to put him far ahead of the world. The money was made from the rapid rise of values of the town lots he had bought on tick.

George C. Gorham, then a youth of seventeen, who afterward became prominent in State and National politics, was the alcalde's clerk during 1850.

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MARYSVILLE, CAL., IN THE '50S

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## **LUCK IN MINING EXCITEMENTS**

California's population during the '50s was a credulous, restless crowd, ready to follow the phantom of gold to any place where it was said to be in quantity and to be obtained through the simple effort of picking it up.

There was first the Gold Lake excitement which took hundreds into the Feather River Sierras; then the Gold Bluffs with its golden sands on ocean beaches of the Northern California Coast. Then came the Kern River excitement and a dash of thousands to that fabulously rich section; then the Fraser River rush took its thousands of believers North and the '50s ended with the great Washoe excitement. Besides these major arousements there was a flock of local ones that kept the avaricious prospectors journeying hither and thither to try their luck in the new diggings rumor was constantly

spreading reports about. Greed sent hundreds away from well doing and where there ought to have been contentment to where hope and expectation unrealized, brought vexation and sorrow.

One of the first local rushes was in January, 1851, to Coloma where gold was first found. A man named Hall sunk a well on his lot and finding pay dirt at the bottom panned out several hundred dollars in one afternoon. This started an excitement and rumor, exaggerating, as usual, the extent of the find, soon brought a motley crowd to the place. Judges, lawyers, doctors, merchants and all other occupations were represented by men with their coats off wielding picks and shovelling dirt on their locations digging down to the big pay streak.

In March, 1853, a company of ten miners ran a tunnel into Mameluke Hill near Georgetown in El Dorado County. They struck a rich vein of quartz and in five days took out \$75,000. Inside of a week over two thousand prospectors were on the hill or adjacent 154 thereto locating and starting a search for the hidden treasure.

At Rough and Ready in May, 1851, was a great excitement. The ground on 2nd Street, which was laid out in town lots a short time previous showed rich prospects. A miner took a notion to prospect on a lot and obtained four bits to the pan. In an hour he got down to bedrock and obtained \$4 to the pan.

Like wildfire the news spread and miners poured in like a swarm of bees. A carpenter at work on a building nearby jumped the ground belonging to his employer and staked off a claim with his chisel and hand saw. One miner, On his way to his cabin with a supply of fresh meat just bought, was at night holding his claim with his feet and the meat with his hands, afraid to let go of either.

The discovery of the great Comstock Lode which brought into existence Virginia City, the enormous bonanzas, the enrichment of hundreds and the penury of thousands who speculated in its mining stocks, was the result of accident rather than design. The effect of the discovery on the business, political and social life of the country has been great and wide spread.



In the fall of 1858 four men named James Finney, alias “Virginia,” John Bishop, alias “Big French John,” Alexander Henderson and John Yount were prospecting in the ravines eroded at the foot of Mt. Davidson. Getting short of provisions they made a visit to the Johntown trading store on the Emigrant road, some miles distant to obtain a winter supply.

As they were passing along a trail on a ridge above where Gold Hill is now located, “Virginia” turned to his companions and pointing to a large mound of earth below them remarked: “Boys, I think thar be gold in those diggings down thar and when we get back I'm going to prospect it.” A few days after returning 155 from Johntown with their supplies, they went over to the mound, headed by “Virginia.” A fall of snow had occurred and covered the mound to a depth of several inches. Taking a shovelful of earth from the mound they washed it by melting snow in their hands and letting the water drip upon the dirt. From this washing they obtained a “color.”

This started “Virginia” to looking around for a favorable spot to make an opening. While walking about the mound, he stepped into a ground hog's hole. From the earth thrown out by this animal, they took a quantity down to a gulch, now known as Crown Point Ravine, where a small stream of water flowed. They panned their dirt there and found it to be rich iii gold. Giving three cheers for their good luck, they then staked out four claims of fifty feet each, giving “Virginia” the first choice of location.

A few days afterward, five other prospectors appeared. They had heard of the find and left Spanish Ravine where they were mining. They staked out claims. They were named James Rogers, Joseph Plato, Sandy Bowers, Henry Comstock and Wm. Knight. During the winter, that now set in, the weather was too severe to permit of much work being done, but a ditch was dug to bring water from Crown Point Ravine to near the locations. When spring opened they all proceeded to work their placer claims with rockers, little thinking of the immense treasure beneath their feet. Two men worked a rocker; one carrying the dirt in a bucket from the placer to the rocker while the other worked it with handle and dipper. They made from \$10 to \$25 a day in gold. During '59 more miners arrived and locations began to change hands, as the extent of the discovery gradually became better known. “Virginia” gave John Vignot, alias “Little French John,” nine feet of his

claim for attending him through a spell of sickness. He sold 156 twenty-one feet to a miner named Durgan for \$50 a foot and the remaining twenty feet to two brothers, named L. E. and J. W. Rice, for about the same price and then went off to prospect for better diggings.

“Big French John” Bishop sold his claim to two miners named Logan and Holmes for \$50 a foot. John Yount sold thirty feet of his claim to J. D. Winters and twenty feet to two miners named Henderson and Butler for \$50 a foot and Alexander Henderson, the fourth miner in the first discovery, sold his to other parties for a stake large enough to satisfy him and start him for his “home” in the East. Of the second crowd that took up claims Rogers sold ten feet for \$100 a foot to a Mrs. Cowan, who afterwards married Sandy Bowers and became known as the “Washoe Seeress.” She claimed to have the faculty of second sight and could see bonanzas hidden in the depths of the Comstock Lode far below the ken of human eyes. Rogers, subsequently became insane and committed suicide. Joseph Plato died and his wife inherited and held his claim. Sandy Bowers was the only one of all these original locators to become really rich from his holdings. Henry Comstock sold out to a miner named Frink, and Wm. Knight sold out to a company, first called Harold & Co., and afterwards merged into the Empire Mill and Mining Company.

Virginia City got its name from James Finney's sobriquet and, through some other freak of nomenclature, the lode was named after Comstock.

The first news of this great find published in California appeared in the Nevada City Transcript on July 1, 1859. It read as follows: “J. T. Stone, formerly of Alpha but now living on Truckee Meadows, has just arrived here and reports the discovery of a vein of ore of extraordinary richness at the head of Six Mile Canyon near Washoe Valley. The vein is four feet wide and is traced a distance of three and 157 one-half miles. The ore is decomposed and works easily. It is like that from which silver is sometimes obtained. The discovery was made by a miner working in Six Mile Canyon who found, as he worked his claim, the richer it became until he struck the vein. The news has created great excitement here.”

From this time it began to spread and soon a rush to Washoe from the Pacific Coast began. The rush to Washoe from California began in the summer of 1859 and grew rapidly until it was of stupendous proportions in the fall of that year. Previous rushes were to places where gold was said to be in pound quantities, but this was for silver by the ton and a new condition entirely. These previous movements meant the labor of placer mining, here it required only the finding of a ledge. A writer made the trip in the fall of '59, hiking with others, from Placerville over the Sierras, then the most popular route, and his experiences well illustrate what the excitement and hardships of the journey meant to the thousands of Californians who joined in the rush. He wrote: "On my arrival in Placerville, I found the whole town in commotion. There was not an animal to be had at any of the stables without leaving an order three days ahead. The stage for Strawberry had made its last trip in consequence of bad roads. Every hotel and restaurant was full to overflowing. The street was blocked with crowds of people going to Washoe. The gambling and drinking places were crowded to suffocation. The clothing stores were covered with placards offering goods at a sacrifice to Washoe miners. The grocery stores were filled with boxes, bags and bundles made up for the Washoe trade. The stables were constantly starting off passenger and pack trains for Washoe. Mexican vaqueros were driving headstrong mules through the town bound for Washoe. In short, there was nothing but Washoe seen or heard 158

#### PLACERVILLE, CAL., IN THE '50S

159 or thought of. Any man who wanted a fortune needed only to get there and pick it up. John Smith made \$10,000 swapping shares; Tom Jones made \$20,000 by right of discovery and Bill Brown \$40,000 running a tavern. Everybody was getting rich hand over fist. It was the place to go for a fortune.

I went to bed, but who could slumber in such a bedlam where hundreds of crack-brained people kept rushing up and down the passageway all night and out of every room banging the doors after them; calling for bootjacks, carpet sacks, cards, cocktails and toddies while amid this ceaseless din arose ever and anon that potent cry 'Washoe' which had unsettled every head.

The first day out, night overtook us at a place called 'Dirty Mike's'. Here we found a ruinously delapidated frame shanty, the bar, of course, being the main feature. Next to the bar was the public bedroom in which was every accommodation except beds, bedding, bedsteads, tables, chairs and wash stand, that is to say, there was a piece of looking glass nailed against the window frame and the public comb and hair brush hanging by strings from a neighboring post. A very good supper of pork and beans, fried potatoes and coffee was served us on very dirty plates by 'Mike's cook. After doing it justice, we turned in our blankets to sleep. The place was all right if 'Mike' would wash his face and his plates at least twice a week.

In almost a continuous line the Washoeites stretched out like a great snake dragging its slow length along as far as the eye could see. In the course of the second day of tramping, we passed parties of every description. Irishmen wheeling their blankets, provisions and took on wheelbarrows; Americans, Frenchmen and Germans on foot, leading heavily-loaded horses or carrying their packs on their backs and their picks and shovels across their shoulders; Mexicans were driving long trains of 160

## ON THE WASHOE TRAIL

161 pack animals and swearing fearfully to keep them in line; dapper-looking gentlemen from San Francisco on livery stable horses; women in men's clothing, mounted on horses, mules and burros; Pike County specimens, seated on piles of furniture and goods in great lumbering wagons; whiskey peddlers with their bar fixtures and supply on mule back, stopping now and then to quench the thirst of the toiling multitude; organ grinders carrying their organs; drovers driving, raving and tearing away frantically through brush and timber after droves of self-willed cattle designed for Washoe slaughter; in short, every imaginable class and every species of industry was represented.

It was a striking and impressive spectacle to see in full competition with youth and strength the pitiable efforts 'of the aged and the sick, dragging their tired limbs and gasping for breath in this mad race for avarice.

I met a stranger bound from Washoe. He had only been there a couple of months and had made a considerable pile. He confidentially advised me to get a grindstone and take it over. There was only one grindstone in Washoe, he had got hold of it, rigged it, and was making \$30 to \$50 a day sharpening tools. Now, nothing was left of the grindstone and he was on his way to Placerville to get a supply.

The winter road for wheel vehicles ended at Strawberry. The rain poured down heavily, making slush and for twelve miles below Strawberry every wagon was stuck in the mud. Dark and raining it was when we arrived and there were crowds scattered around the house as if they had some secret and possible enjoyment in the contemplation of the weather. Edging our way through, we found the barroom packed as closely as it could be without bursting out one of the walls and of all the motley gangs that ever happened 162 together within a space of twenty feet this certainly was the most extraordinary. Gentlemen with slouched hats and big boots; Jew peddlers dripping wet; red-shirted miners, teamsters, vaqueros, packers and traders, swearing horribly at nothing; some warming themselves before a tremendous log fire that sent up a reeking steam from the conglomerated mass of wet and muddy clothes to say nothing of the boots and socks that lay simmering near the coals. A few bare and sorefooted outcasts crouched down in the corners, trying to catch a nap and here and there a returned Washoeite described in graphic language, garnished with oaths, the wonders and beauties of Virginia City. Chiefly remarkable in the crowd was the hungry horde pressed in double file against the dining room door awaiting the fourth charge at the supper table. At the first tinkle of the bell the door was burst open with a tremendous crash and for a moment no battle scene of Waterloo or Crimea, with troops dealing death and destruction around them could have equalled the onslaught of this famished brigade. The whole house actually tottered and trembled at the concussion as if shaken by an earthquake. Long before the main body had assaulted the table the din of arms was heard above the general uproar. The deafening clatter of knives, forks and plates; the battle cry of 'Waiter!' 'Waiter!' 'Pork and beans!' 'sausages!' 'Ham and Eggs!' 'Quick waiter, for God's sake,' made a scene of destruction and mastication long to be remembered. When the table was deserted, it presented a shocking scene of desolation. Whole dishes were swept of their contents; coffee pots were drained to their dregs; knives, forks, plates and spoons lay in a confused

mess among the remnants of the meal; chunks of bread and biscuits were scattered over the tables and floor; teacups and saucers upset and the waiters hot, red and steaming, were panting 163 and swearing after their strenuous labor and began the work of arranging for the fifth engagement which followed within a half hour. A sixth was fought before all were fed. I was too late to secure a bed in the general bedroom or 'corral' where two hundred and fifty tired travelers were already snoring in double-shotted bunks, 2x6, but, the landlord was a man of inexhaustible resources. A private whisper in his ear made him a friend forever. He nodded sagaciously and led me into a small parlor, about 15x20, in which he gave five of us what he called a 'lay out'. A 'lay out' is on the floor with your own blankets for a bed. This was a special favor and I would have cherished it in my memory for years had not a suspicion been aroused in my mind before the lapse of half an hour, that there were others in the confidence of the host. Scarcely had I entered on my first nap. when somebody undertook to walk on me. I grasped him firmly by the leg. The intruder I found was a Jew peddler. He offered me a cigar in apology, which I smoked in token of amity. When daylight broke I cast around me to see what everybody was doing to cause so much commotion. I perceived there were about forty sleepers getting up. Boots, strongly-scented feet and socks were to be seen in every direction; blankets, packs of clothes, shirts and I know not what else all scattered about. When I arose the Jew peddler was gone and so were my socks. They were not very valuable, not very clean, but still they were a pair of socks, an article hard to get on the road to Washoe.”

## **GOOD LUCK OF GAME HUNTERS**

The foothills and Sierras of California were alive in the '50s with game birds and animals. Among the miners were many Nimrods, who frequently preferred 164 to shoot a bag of quail or tackle the massive grizzly bear, than mine. To this love of sport are some rich discoveries due.

Major William Downie was one of the most intrepid and persistent Prospectors that ever tramped

## **MORNING BATTLE AT STRAWBERRY OVER THE “LOST SOCKS” CLAIM**

over the Sierra Mountains in quest of gold. He arrived in San Francisco in 1849 and worked his way, 165 by row boat and other methods of transportation, to Marysville, where he became imbued

with the belief from seeing the nuggets found in the nearby bars on the Yuba River were worn smooth, that the source of supply of the gold was in the higher Sierras. He was enthused with the impression that if this source could be reached, the gold there would be found in big, rugged lumps as heavy as a man could lift and in prodigious quantity. With this object in view, he organized a company of a dozen or more composed of a Kanaka, who afterwards gave the name to Kanaka Creek, a Mexican or two, several negroes and some of other nationalities and proceeded up the North Fork of the Yuba River, prospecting the bars and ravines where a white man had never been before. Wherever the gold found was worn smooth and showed it had been carried far from its place of origin, the major did not loiter but kept on his way, until they finally reached the locality where Downieville, named after him, is built. Here he thought he had found the object of his search. While gold was taken here from the placers 'in pound quantities, the major never made and kept the fortune he sought and after spending nearly a decade mining in Sierra County he was off to Cariboo in '58 and it was said he prospected the farthest North any miner had gone in the '60s. The reports of the discoveries made by this party going up the Yuba River, produced in 1850, a rush of miners up that stream that soon brought into existence the prosperous mining towns of Downieville, LaPorte, Gibsonville, Chips Flat and others that flourished for a decade or more.

One Sunday morning in June, 1856, Major Downie walked over the ridge of a hill on Slate Creek and while obtaining a view of the surrounding country, he, carelessly, dislodged with his foot, a quartz boulder about the size of a man's head which was 166

#### DOWNIEVILLE, CAL., IN THE '50S

167 half buried in the earth. AS it rolled a few feet away the major gave it only a moment's notice and any impulse he may have had to examine it passed quickly away. A small bowl-shaped hole was left in the ground where the boulder was pushed from.

About a month afterward a Chileno, who was mining on Slats Creek, went for a quail shoot on this ridge and near the top shot a quail that fell wounded into the bowl-shaped hole left by the boulder the Major had kicked out of his Way. In its dying flutterings the quail disturbed the earth on the sides of the little hole and when the Chileno hunter picked it up he saw a small piece of gold about

an inch long and of the thickness of a slate pencil, sticking out of the dirt. Finding it adhering to a piece of quartz he removed the small 'boulder with his ramrod and took it to Downieville in the evening. It weighed about three pounds and an assayer obtained from it nearly a pound of 'gold worth about \$200. This was all the Chileno obtained from his find.

His streak of good luck becoming known, the next morning, miners who knew something about quartz, were early on the ridge; found a rich ledge and the whole hill was soon covered with prospectors and locations. The hill proved to be ribbed with rich quartz veins and half a hundred miners made the fortunes there they came to California to seek. Major Downie often lamented his ill-luck and always maintained that if he had been looking for a quartz ledge instead of a stray son of a jackass on that Sunday morning in June, he would have found the fortune he momentarily stood upon.

A man named Raspberry went hunting quail in October, 1856, near Angel's Camp, Calaveras County. He used a double-barreled, muzzle-loading shotgun and was shooting an inferior grade of gun powder, 168 which, after a few hours of shooting, so fouled his gun barrels, that his ramrod, on driving down a wad in one of them, got stuck and could not be withdrawn. After trying in vain several different ways of getting it out, he concluded to shoot the ramrod into a patch of soft mud, made by a spring that oozed out of the side of a hill. Tying his handkerchief to the protruding end of his ramrod so that he could follow its flight and locate it after it struck, he fired his gun. With the usual obstinate persistency when things are going wrong, the ramrod took an upward and sidelong flight and struck in a small manzanita bush about fifty feet away from the marshy ground he had aimed at. Raspberry, after expressing his feelings in words of profane emphasis, went to the spot he saw his ramrod hit and found it partly imbedded in the roots of the manzanita bush. He pulled the bush out of the ground, roots and all, and when reaching for his ramrod, he noticed a small piece of quartz held in the roots of the manzanita bush. With a miner's experienced eye, he examined the quartz and found it contained gold. He began digging, with his ramrod, into the small hole he had made and soon disclosed a quartz vein. With his pocket knife he extracted that afternoon quartz that yielded him \$700. The next day, with proper tool, he took out ten pounds of gold worth over \$2000



and on the third day he got out thirty-three pounds worth \$7000. He continued to work the vein for several months and other miners who made locations adjacent shared in his good luck.

Near Pilot Peak, fifteen miles north of Downieville, in 1855, a Frenchman went hunting with a Mexican. While creeping upon a grouse that he heard drumming in a tree, through excitement, he accidentally discharged his gun and the charge struck a 169 small quartz rock on the hillside about ten feet away. The rock rolled down the hill and fell at the feet of the Mexican standing in, the ravine below. As it struck it broke in two. While the boulder showed the effects of shot, it also showed gold in its fractured ends. The hunters took it to Pine Grove, a mining camp near by and sold it for \$90. The find started a number of miners from Pine Grove to seek the ledge the piece of quartz was broken from and they found it. It was one of great richness.

John Minear, of Sonora, hunting in the mountains in the eastern part of Tuolumne County in October, 1858, killed a grizzly bear. It rolled down the steep declivity of a hill and stopped against a ledge of rock that was covered with moss and concealed by a growth of live oak trees. While skinning the grizzly, he noticed a piece of quartz, which the bear had loosened from the ledge with his last kicks, lying nearby and picked it up. It contained a seam of gold and an examination of the ledge showed it to be quartz of astonishing richness. It proved to be a continuation of the famous Buchannan Lode that became noted for the fortunes it contained.

## **GOOD LUCK FOR NEWCOMERS**

The axiom that Good Luck is being in the right place at the right time seems to be exemplified by that which fell occasionally upon newcomers during the Placer Mining Era.

The first mention of Good Luck to newcomers is in Marysville in August, 1850, where it was published that James A. Wilkins, the Stillman Brothers and Rodney Churchill from Lowell, Massachusetts, of a party of nine who left Marysville in June, 1850, to mine on Tuscaloosa Bar on the Feather River, had 170 returned and were homeward bound. In four weeks the party had taken out of the bar \$75,000 in gold dust and divided \$8000 apiece.

In the early '50s a young attorney from an eastern state arrived at Mokelumne Hill. Uncertain what to do, on the day after his arrival, he took a walk around to look about the new country he was in. He finally reached a place called Corral Flat, near the town, where rich ground had been found and a large number of miners were at work. He wore a stovepipe hat, the headgear to which all professional men were partial at this period. As he approached, two miners who were in an angry dispute over the boundary lines of their claims stopped arguing for a moment and one of them hailed him with the inquiry: "Are you a lawyer?" Answering in the affirmative, the two miners agreed to arbitrate their case and accept the decision as final. His decision must have been on the King Solomon order, for they accepted it, and then in the free-handed manner things were done in these times, they formed a partnership and offered him a third interest in the combined claim, if he would help mine it. Not daunted, he removed his stovepipe hat and coat and under their direction dug and worked a rocker with them and cleaned up nearly \$8000 as his share.

In July, 1850, W. H. Julius from New York, met John Grives from New Orleans; both just arrived at Marysville. They made an agreement to go up the Yuba River and mine. They went to the Jim Crow Diggings and there found a hole dug by some miners ahead of them, who, on reaching the water level, had abandoned the claim. A sight survey suggested to them that by digging a ditch about fifty feet in length and deep enough, the hole could be drained and the 171 claim worked. They went to work and dug the ditch. The rush of water from the hole, when tapped, swept much dirt from the sides of the ditch, widening it considerably and when the flow subsided, one of the two saw a piece of gold sticking out of the side of the ditch a few feet from the hole. Jumping into the ditch, he took his large clasp knife and began digging the piece of gold out. The more he dug the larger grew the nugget and the greater became his excitement. He finally extracted a thirty-pound nugget worth over \$6000. They immediately returned to Marysville, where their find caused quite a furore among the expectant immigrants and miners and the nugget was placed on exhibition in a room of the Sutter Hotel with a charge of fifty cents a look. They decided to take the nugget East and exhibit it in the large cities at an admission price and left Marysville a few days afterward for that purpose. Their sojourn in California was less than thirty days.

A young man named Tisdale arrived from Toronto, Canada, in October, 1851. He desired to mine and went to Marysville to make his start for the diggings. but without having any definite idea where he would go. He got into a conversation with a miner who offered to sell him part of a claim he owned in "Pinch 'Em Tight" Diggings not far from Marysville. The name took his fancy and for no other reason did he pay the few hundred dollars the miner asked for the claim. He returned to Marysville in April, 1852, on his way home with \$36,000 in gold his claim had paid in the few months he had worked in it.

A middle-aged lady arrived at the Tremont Hotel, Marysville, in 1852, and expected to be met by a relative there. Much distressed by his non-appearance, she told the proprietor of the hotel that she was en route 172 to Downieville; was financially distressed, the expenses she had to meet en route being greater than she had expected them to be and her relative not coming, made it necessary for her to appeal to him for aid. She desired the loan of \$20 to reach her destination. Somewhat dubious, the hotelman loaned her the money. About a month afterward she returned and meeting her creditor, with a smiling face, she exclaimed: "Oh! I've been successful and have come to pay my debt."

She had met her relative at Downieville and he built a canvas-covered house, fitted it with a stove, dishes, a long table and benches, and started her, with about thirty boarders at \$12 a week, in a boarding house venture. The house had a ground floor and one day while sweeping it, she noticed the glitter of gold. On examination she found it was from a nugget and carefully searching she found a few more. She at once told her relative of the find and there were no more meals served. They moved out the fixtures and proceeded to mine the premises. The first day they washed out \$500 and the succeeding days were all equally as good. She was now returning to her former home in the East with the wealth her boarding house venture had left her no ground to complain about.

Near Kekey, El Dorado County, in March, 1857, an immigrant who had that day arrived from the East, being full of curiosity over gold mining and desiring to learn how to do it, went to where a number of miners were at work in a claim. In order to watch more closely the miner who was panning the day's clean up from the sluice boxes, he seated himself upon a pile of tailings. Noticing

a quartz cobble about the size and shape of an ostrich egg in the tailing pile, he picked it up. He was surprised to see a little bead of gold sticking out of the side and he took it to a storekeeper in the place, who pounded it up, in a hand 173 mortar. It was found to be a shell of quartz containing a yolk of gold weighing over two pounds and worth nearly \$500.

H. Cohn, of St. Louis, Sierra County, in December, '1858, bought a four-pound nugget from a man who had been in California only a week, for \$775. He dug it in Illinois Canon near Poker Flat. It had several pick marks upon it showing it had been struck a number of times with pick points by other miners who did not find it.

At Butte City, near Jackson, Amador County, a young man just arrived across the plains in September, 1857, applied to a company of miners for work. They were developing a quartz ledge and sinking an incline. On account of the foul air therein. from blasting with powder, they determined before doing any drifting or cross-cutting, ,to have a ventilating shaft sunk. The “greenhorn was put to work doing the preliminary work on the ventilating shaft and after working half an hour and getting down a few feet he dug out a nugget weighing over four pounds and worth \$900. A dispute arose as to whom it belonged. The employers claimed it because the employee found it, but, it being ascertained the ventilating shaft was a few feet off their claim, the decision was in favor of the finder keeping it.

In January, 1857, a young man arrived at Sonora from the East looking for a relative who was mining near that town. He was directed to go to a certain gulch a few miles distant, but, through his unfamiliarity with the country he got off the right trail and went up the wrong gulch. In making his way along its uneven bed, it became necessary for him to cross over a pile of tailings that had been thrown from 174 a long tom. In attempting to cross he lost his footing in the loose pile of rocks and gravel and had to make a scramble to get to the top, using both hands and both feet in doing so, thereby disturbing a large portion of the pile. When he got on the top and looked down at the trench he had made, he saw in its center a nugget weighing three pounds and worth over \$600. It had been pitchforked out of the long tom by some careless miner some years before and was evidently waiting for a lucky finder.

In Columbia, Tuolumne County, there arrived in May, 1857, two young men from New York City. They were typical Fire Jakies. One of them was suffering from burns received while fighting a fire a few days before the steamer sailed, and still kept his leg bandaged. He was unable, and perhaps unwilling as well, to engage in any kind of hard labor and his companion was equally indisposed to work hard. They loitered around the town until they had spent all their funds, exhausted their credit and by these circumstances compelled to make a move. An acquaintance advised them, as they were down to bed rock, to get out and dig, offering to furnish them with a pick, shovel and pan to do it with. They concluded to take his advice and asking him to direct them which way to go, he pointed to a trail leading over a hill and told them to follow it until they came to the cabin of a miner whom they knew and who would further instruct them. On their way, the injured man found it necessary to stop and adjust the bandage around his leg. While doing so, his companion took a shovelful of grass roots from the bank on which he was sitting and carried it in the pan to the gulch and washed it out. He found a "color," the first he had ever seen in his life and brought forth by his own efforts. He then proceeded to sink a hole to the bedrock, but 175 at a depth of three feet, he uncovered a nugget that weighed over an ounce. He then took a pan of dirt and washed it. There was five and a half ounces of gold in it. They then returned to town, sold enough gold dust to buy supplies and necessary took and went back to work their claim. They dug \$12,000 worth of gold from this bank in the next eight days and then started back to New York City.

In November, 1855, two young men from the East, took passage on the stage from Sacramento, going to Downieville, where a friend they had known in the East lived.

A heavy storm prevailed, streams were running at flood heights, bridges washed away and they stopped at Auburn to wait for the fury of the storm to subside. They had bought blankets and tools to take with them. They loitered around Auburn several days, spending their time in the saloons; finally taking hands in a poker game, in which they were cleaned out and were broke about the time the storm broke. They concluded to walk back to Sacramento, there get employment and recoup. An acquaintance advised them to take their took and prospect on the way back. They started in the early morning carrying their blankets: a pick, shovel and pan. About two miles out on the

Sacramento road they stopped at a small ravine that crossed the road and was running a big head of water. They commenced ground sluicing as a chance and in a short time washed out a pocket of nuggets, one of which weighed three pounds and they returned to Auburn that evening with \$980 worth of gold.

All the finds of newcomers were not examples of Good Luck. One in particular was not. In 1857 a young immigrant took possession of an abandoned claim at Butte City, in Amador County. he began 176 ground sluicing a bank and in about an hour there came into view the heel and sole of a boot. Surprised at seeing such an article washed out of a bank he was expecting to find only gold in, he took hold of the boot to remove it into view when he found he had hold of the leg of a man. He washed into view the body of the original owner of the claim who had disappeared two years before and was supposed to have gone in search of better diggings. Instead of his doing that, he had been caved upon and killed, but being a newcomer, was a stranger and had no acquaintances to miss him.

## **GOOD LUCK IN TOWNS**

The towns of Sonora, Columbia, Mokelumne Hill, Auburn, Placerville, Nevada City, Downieville, Oroville, Shasta, Yreka and many others of lesser note, were built upon and surrounded by rich placers. They were not laid out and built according to any definite plan. Like Topsy, they “just grewed.” Starting from the pioneer trading store, the streets followed the trails made by the miners coming to trade. During the '50s these towns were frequently swept by fires and in washing the ashes and cinders to recover coins and jewelry left in the flames, the owners of the town lots often found they had pay dirt on their premises.

Sonora was a town most prolific of such events. It is told that a man leading a mule attached to a cart up the main street one morning, after a rain in the '50s, stooped to remove a stone out of the way and found he had hold of a nugget weighing thirty-five pounds and worth \$7500.

In June, 1853, after a fire, a number of men were removing a pile of rocks from a lot on the main street of Sonora, when one of them picked up a nugget 177 weighing three and a half pounds and worth \$700.

A man removing the debris from his lot, also on Main Street, picked up a five and a half pound nugget worth \$1200, and a Mexican, washing the ashes from his lot on Washington Street, to find coins left in the fire, found a six-pound nugget worth \$1300. A man named Rudolfson, on a lot near the center of the town, picked up a lump of quartz and gold which he sold for \$450. In October, 1859, behind Gorham and Company's store on Washington Street, a pound and a half nugget was dug out near the back door.

On a Sunday afternoon in January, '56, a Mexican, after a heavy shower, found a small quartz boulder in an alley off the main street in Sonora that showed a speck of gold. In a hurry for money he sold it to General George S. Evans for \$25. It yielded \$378.

A miner named Kelly washed out his lot at the north end of Main Street, Sonora, in 1859, and found lumps weighing seven and a quarter, three and several from one-half to two and one-half pounds in weight.

On February 8, 1857, a heavy rainstorm prevailed which caused Sonora's Creek to raise six feet, which was high water mark then. A citizen standing at the rear door of Wells Fargo & Company's office watching the flood, looked down at an eddy near the bottom of the door steps and saw the glitter of gold. The dirt had been washed away from around a six-pound nugget and he was over \$1200 richer for loitering around that place.

The town of Placerville was almost totally destroyed by fire July 7, 1856.

One of those to lose his house and personal effects was a man named L. A. Norton. He lost a sum of money consisting of gold and silver coins of various denominations; also some jewelry and to recover these 178

## SONORA, CAL., IN THE '50S

179 from the ashes and cinders, he decided to sluice the ground. He obtained a head of water for the purpose from Hangtown Creek and began operations. He not only found, with this method, all the valuables he had lost in the fire, but that the ground was full of nuggets. He gathered from the washing of the dirt and the bed rock crevices he scraped, enough gold to not only rebuild on his property, but to erect three other houses.

Probably the youngest prospector and smallest in size to make a good luck find was little Sammy Timmons, who in March, 1858, was four years old and living in Placerville. His mother sent him out to play in the back yard and child-like, in imitation of his grown up seniors, he let his imagination play he was a miner. When called in by his mother, he came lugging a quartz boulder almost too heavy for him to toddle with, which he had uncovered in his diminutive mining operations. It contained nearly \$200 worth of gold.

Frank Anderson, a young man mining on Goodyear Bar, took a stroll up the Yuba River on September 14, 1849, and went as far as the forks where Downieville was afterwards built. He found the gold so plentiful that he could separate it from the sand washing it in his hands. It was probably as rich a placer as was ever found in the State. The next day he and three others panned out thirty pounds of gold in three hours, amounting to over \$6000. A company of miners called the Jersey men took out thirty pounds a day for forty days and would have had a ton of gold, if the flood had not driven them out of the river bed. That the ground upon which the town was built was good placer diggings goes without saying.

## 180

A number of miners out of work in September, 1859, took a contract to dig out a large cellar under Givin's corner on Main and Commercial Streets, Downieville, for \$250 and the dirt they took out. It took them twenty days to do the digging and they made about \$2 a day apiece from the job, but the dirt was a rich paying proposition. They washed over an ounce a day to the man and made about as much out of the cellar dirt as the lot and its building were considered worth.



In Mokelumne Hill on a Sunday morning in November, 1858, after a heavy rain storm, a lady on her way to church, picked up a nugget weighing about four ounces. It was found near the church door. Actuated by a religious impulse she dropped it into the contribution plate, which caused the minister to rise to the occasion and remark that it was not sinful to look for gold on the Lord's Day, provided what was found was given to the service of the Lord. He also reminded his congregation that after a heavy rainstorm nuggets like mushrooms, were more plentiful than at any other time.

In January, 1859, a miner out of curiosity, prospected the dirt on Montgomery Street in the town of Oroville and found it showing thirty cents to a pan. This is the principal street in the town and an excitement followed with the locating of claims and preparations to work them that threatened to tear the street out by its roots.

At Placerville, in 1851, a man named Pile had a blacksmith shop with a small space of ground in the rear on the bank of Hangtown Creek. His little daughter, with a wash basin, amused herself after school hours washing dirt from the bank and inside 181 of two months had accumulated over two pounds of gold dust worth over \$400.

Chickens were persistent gatherers of small nuggets in these mining towns and their gizzards were regularly searched by the cooks who prepared them for the oven.

At Diamond Springs in 1856 one was killed for a Sunday dinner whose gizzard panned out \$12.80.

The "Pickers" was a generic name applied, as early as 1850, to a number of men who developed into a class too lazy to work a placer; who loafed around the mining camps, a sort of tinhorn sporting men, until a heavy rainstorm came along. Then, with a pan and sheath knife they searched the crevices and rocks the rushing streams, pouring down the hillsides in and about these placer mining towns washed clean, picking out the nuggets, little and big, to be found there. One Sunday in November, 1851, a gold buyer in Mokelumne Hill purchased over \$500 worth of gold dust from these "Pickers."

In February, 1852, a “Picker” in Sonora found in two days one nugget weighing five and one-half, one, four and one-half and three weighing one-half pounds each and received over \$2400 for his easy labor.

One day in November, 1852, the “Pickers” in Sonora found in the gulleys of that town a three and one-half pound nugget and two others that were one-half pound in weight. At Columbia on the same day a “Picker” found an eight-pound nugget.

In January, 1852, one found a two and one-half pound nugget on Broadway, Columbia, and in November, 1854, a “Picker” found in a street of Sonora a quartz boulder weighing seventeen pounds that contained 182 eight pounds of gold, worth \$1700. As late as March, 1857, a nugget weighing one and one-half pounds was found by a lady in Sonora in the street in front of her home after a heavy rainfall.

### **GOOD LUCK OF “GREENHORNS” vs. “SMART ALECKS”**

Along about '53, the miners who had come to California in the “fall of '49 and spring of '50,” began to designate the immigrants coming then to mine, who had never seen a chispa or a sluice box “Greenhorns.”

Among the pioneers were a number, in every mining camp, who delighted in filling the minds of the credulous immigrants with extravagant tales of imaginary accumulations of wealth, and enjoyed sending them to dig for gold in places where it was believed none could be found. These practical jokers were sometimes designated as “Smart Alecks” and it happened frequently that the “Greenhorns” sent on a supposed fool's errand found a Good Luck streak instead of the expected discomfiture.

In May, 1857, three young Germans walked from Sacramento to Jackson, a distance of fifty miles, carrying their blankets on their backs with tools and grub, intending to find a mine. They knew as much about placer mining as an elephant knows about feathers. Going to a place called Butte Gulch, they were told by some Old Timers there to work a pile of old tailings washed from a claim

worked out a few years before. Owing to a lack of water, the pile had to be carried in buckets quite a distance to where a supply of water could be obtained to wash the pile within a rocker. They worked steadily a week digging and carrying the tailings from the claim to where they could be Mashed, when they were ready to do so. During this time, they were the butt of the Old Timers, who were greatly amused to see three green Dutchmen 183 owners. They were always profuse with their thanks working an abandoned claim that would not pay for their salt. The Germans bought a rocker and began to wash their pile. In a few days they sold forty ounces of gold dust worth about \$700 and they continued to work for several months, making an ounce a day. The tailings covered a pay streak of gravel that had been overlooked and untouched by the first to the Old Timers who directed them to go there to mine.

On July 4, 1853, four “Greenhorns,” just from the East by steamer, appeared on Wood's Creek in Tuolumne County, looking for diggings. They met a “Smart Aleck” who directed them to a place where he said he had just abandoned a claim and they were welcome to take possession and help themselves to 'whatever they found there. They found the place and worked that afternoon. Much to their surprise they uncovered a twelve-pound 'nugget, also a five-pound one and enough smaller ones to make their clean up amount to a little 'over \$4000 in gold. That evening, before they had hardly time to congratulate themselves upon their good luck, a committee of miners waited upon them. They were informed the ground they had been working belonged to two miners who had gone to Sonora to celebrate the Fourth and would return in a day or two; that claim-jumping was a crime that would not be condoned in that locality and they would have to “git up and git” or fight. They moved on and it is doubtful if the owners of the claim ever knew what their celebration of the Fourth cost them in nuggets they never found. At Placerville in 1853 a miner had worked a fortnight stripping a claim to pay dirt and bed rock and then found it was not paying anything. Thinking it 184 worthless, he put on a bold front and induced three “Greenhorns,” just arrived, to buy it from him for \$150. They commenced working the next day, washing every bit of dirt and during the afternoon they struck a pay streak several feet above the bed rock, where it was not expected to be found, that paid \$100 to the pan. The original owner sauntered over while they were

in the midst of their good luck and tried to buy the claim back, but it was useless and he had the chagrin of knowing that they cleaned up over \$6,000 within a week.

Near Georgetown, El Dorado County, in 1854, three miners were working a placer claim that was located on a small flat at the mouth of a ravine. It had been quite rich, but the bed rock began to rise and the pay decreased until it was not paying expenses. Just as matters had reached a crisis four young men, “Greenhorns,” looking for a claim appeared and desired to purchase the outfit and finish mining the flat. It was agreed that the new comers should work the claim for half a day and then, if satisfied, pay the price the owners had named for it, which was based upon what it had been rather than what it was. That night the owners shot several ounces of coarse gold from a shot gun, peppering the bank of the claim freely and well “salting” it to make a good showing the next day. The “Greenhorns” came on time, mined until noon, then cleaned up the sluice boxes and were well pleased with the result. They paid the price asked and took possession. They worked steadily two days washing the “salted” bank. A large boulder of serpentine came into view, projecting from the bank, and had to be removed. When it was rolled out of the way, there came in sight a seam of decomposed quartz containing the usual incredible wealth of these veins, and when they finished working it, they never knew and would not 185 have cared to know they were really swindled when they bought the claim. What they took out made the price they paid for it look like a mere bagatelle.

In the early '50s a couple of “Greenhorns,” by direction of some Old Timers, commenced sinking a hole at the foot of Old Hangtown Hill near Piety Point, a short distance from Placerville. From the fact it was a new place and not believed to carry any gold the curiosity of a number of miners passing by was excited and they gathered around the hole to guy the new comers as they worked and panned their dirt. When they got down to bedrock, one of the Old Timers took the pan of dirt to show the new comers how to pan and went down to the creek where water flowed, with it, followed by the idlers. Being a practical joker, he, on the way down, dropped a specimen he carried as a pocket piece weighing about four ounces and worth about \$60, into the pan of dirt and when the dirt was nearly all washed out of the pan it came in view. There was a wild rush up the hill to make locations all over the vacant ground and claims were staked off in a jiffy. The joker laughed heartily as he watched them making their locations and after enjoying himself several minutes, turned his

attention to washing out the balance of the pan of dirt. Then came his inning. There was a flock of little nuggets around his specimen that sent him scampering up the hill to get in on the find. Placer ground as rich as any found near Hangtown was developed here.

## **JUST LUCK**

Disasters, that caused a financial loss sometimes proved to be the forerunner of a streak of Good Luck. And, while they were at the time of their occurrence viewed with dismay and alarm they sometimes turned out to be blessings in disguise.

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In 1856 a number of brick masons proceeded to open a brickyard on a bank of clay in Five Pound Gulch near San Andreas. They built a whim and had made several thousand bricks and preparatory to burning a kiln, had placed them to dry and harden in the open air. A heavy rain storm set in and dissolved the new made bricks into mud again. In the muddy mess there came into view a large number of chispas and an investigation showed that the clay from which the bricks were made was "lousy" with gold. It resulted in the opening of a rich placer claim and the washing away of the proposed brickyard in sluice boxes instead of burning the earth in a kiln.

In June, 1857, what was known as Kimball's Ditch in Sierra County broke. It supplied water to the mines in the neighborhood of Kanaka Buttes. The rush of water down the steep hillside washed away a large quantity of earth and left exposed a large section of bedrock. Upon this bedrock was a strata of gravel deposited by an ancient stream buried many feet deep by the changes of nature. When the gang of men sent to make repairs to the ditch arrived and the water was shut off, they saw the exposed bedrock covered with nuggets. In a very short time over \$9,000 worth were picked up. More than three hundred locators of claims were soon on the ground and many subsequently made fortunes out of their holdings.

During the winter of 1857 at Prospect Slide near Volcano, Amador County, a freshet caused a heavy slide to occur in a gravel claim that had, at much expense, just been opened up. This cave was at first viewed with dismay by the owners and financial difficulties stared them in the face.

Subsequently, it was found, that the cave exposed, a long and deep crevice from 187 which was taken on the first day it was worked nearly eight pounds of gold worth \$1,700.

The Yuba River flowing through high precipitous bluffs is a stream that rapidly rises when a storm breaks upon the Sierras. This frequently was a cause of disaster to the miners working the bars above the foothills.

In the fall of 1853 a heavy rain storm suddenly began and caused an unexpected rise of the river. To save their mining equipment from being floated away by the flood, many miners had to risk their lives, as well as their investments. While busily engaged in saving his sluices and took a miner saw the floating body of a drowned miner drift into shallow water on the bar. Hastening to it, he had just time to grasp the coat collar, as the rising current carried the body away and the coat, pulling off, was left in his hands. The pockets held a jack knife and a buckskin purse containing a pound of gold dust, but nothing to show who the drowned miner was. The body floated down the river several miles further into the flume of a mining company, where it lodged and stopped the flow of water. One of the miners was sent to ascertain the cause and finding the body, removed it to the bank. It was then clad only in a shirt and trousers, but around the waist was a treasure belt in which was carried eleven pounds of gold. It was probably the result of the dead man's season of work on the Yuba, but who he was, from whence he came and how he met his sad fate was never ascertained.

## **LUCK IN BURIED GOLD**

Early in the '50s the practice was begun by the placer miners, who did not squander their gold dust, to place it in tin cans and bottles and bury it in some convenient place about their cabin or claim. In 1858,. several small school boys, playing iii the lot where the Odd Fellows Hall then stood in Sonora, unearthed a 188 soda water bottle containing nearly a pound of gold dust. As no claimant appeared rind the old settlers could not fit a recollection to apply, the bottle must have been buried soon after Sonora was begun.

After Adams Express Company failed and caused several thousand miners to lose their deposits placed with that company, and, owing to the uncertain financial condition many business men had

got into in 1854 and later, the number of placer miners who buried their surplus gold dust greatly increased.

Many of these hidden treasures, owing to loss of bearings, death and the unexpected changes of location of their sextons, still remain beneath the sod. There they will stay until, in some unexpected way, Good Luck to some individual uncovers them.

On an October day in '60 a young citizen of San Andreas started for a day of shooting in the foothills near that town. On starting out his wife requested him to bring her a bunch of ferns, if he found any that were suitable for her to use in decoration. During the afternoon, he was seated to rest awhile on the bank of a gully where a small rivulet trickled down the hillside over the rocks, into the creek below. Several feet away, growing out from under a stone, was a luxuriant bunch of ferns, the fronds of which were large and attractive and just what he knew would please his wife. Taking out his jack knife, he separated the roots of the plant from the earth in a circle around it, then pulled the bunch of ferns from beneath the rock. Attached to the roots, which had grown through the rust eaten holes, was the lid of a tin can. Wondering how it could have found such a resting place, he looked under the rock into the hole made there and saw a rust-eaten tin can, which he pulled out and found filled with nuggets. It had been there a decade at least. No mining had been done on the creek for several years nor had there been 189 for five years any cabin within half a mile of the buried treasure. How and when the owner and his treasure became separated will probably never be known.

Two brothers arrived in Placerville from the East in March, 1856, and looking for a claim to mine were directed, by an acquaintance, to a ravine about a mile north of the town. The first day they spent in digging a ditch to convey water to their sluice box. On the morning of the second day, after working a few hours, they heard the thumping of a large tin can rolling through the sluice box. It had been washed out of the bank of their ditch and rolled by the head of water down into the sluice box. On removing it from the sluice box and taking off the lid, they found it full of nuggets. They quit at once and taking their find to town sold the gold for \$11,000. Concluding they were rich enough, they left on the next stage for San Francisco and took the steamer "home." About

two hours after the steamer sailed, the sheriff of El Dorado County arrived in search of them and the coin. The tin can of gold belonged to an Irishman named "Mike" who mined and lived near the ravine and had buried it for safe keeping. While it was being washed into view, he was in Placerville celebrating St. Patrick's Day. When the sheriff returned and reported his non-success "Mike" only remarked: "Be jabbers, thin, I have plenty more handy and I'll kape it safe."

In 1853 a negro on a prospecting trip and bound for the Tuolumne River stopped at the base of Table Mountain near Shaw's Flat. There he saw, sticking its nose out of the ground, a nugget weighing thirty-five pounds. Not desiring to carry it with him nor of turning back from his trip, he buried it where he had found it and went on. He returned in about three weeks and turned an inky paleness when he saw a company of Italians working the ground where he had buried his nugget. 190 Fortunately, they had missed it by a few feet and the treasure was not lost to him.

In 1857 a miner near Columbia, Tuolumne County, concluded to go to Fraser River. He had about \$3,000 in gold dust he did not need and decided to bury it. About 9 o'clock on a full moon night, he selected a spot, where the moonbeams, passing between the fork," of a tree struck the ground where the shadow of the top of another tree met them. Here he dug a hole about three feet deep and cached his treasure. Two years later he returned, unsuccessful and in need, and sought the spot for his buried gold. The full moon was there just as bright but it now shed its moonbeams unobstructed over a treeless acreage. The ruthless axe of the miner had felled the trees and left the field so that the returned miner was completely stumped. He dug over an acre of ground, at every likely spot and searched for a month, when he gave it up. It may be there yet, as the man and the incident were soon forgotten.

Thomas Hodge mining at Coon Hollow, near Placerville, in 1857, filled a soda water bottle with between five and ten pounds of gold dust and buried it on his claim. A year later he was taken with the Fraser River fever and concluded to dig up his bottle and go. Search he made for it, but in vain. He could not find it and left without it. A year afterward he returned and resumed work on his claim. A young man named Van Logan began working the adjoining ground and a month or so later he found Hodge's bottle of gold dust some twenty feet distant from where Hodge thought he



had buried it. Logan was alone when he found it, but was honest, hunted up Hodge and refused to accept half of the contents of the bottle when it was offered him by the happy owner.

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A miner named George Archer at Jackson Gate on the North Fork of Jackson Creek in 1851, buried a can containing about \$800 in gold in the ground floor of his cabin. In '53 he, intending to move and mine in a gulch at Butte City, a few miles away, dug for the buried can and was unable to find it. He suspicioned a neighboring miner, and as circumstantial evidence confirmed his suspicion, he accused the man of taking it. There came near being bloodshed over it. Several other parties at different times occupied the cabin until 1858, when it accidentally caught fire and burned down. Archer, on learning of this, concluded to make another search for his can of gold and digging up the ground floor of the cabin, he finally found it, several feet away from where he thought he had buried it. The miner accused of stealing it now had his inning.

In January, 1859, a company of Frenchmen were working a claim on Coyote Flat near Sonora and began washing away the ground on which a miner's cabin had once stood. A tin can came into view that contained eighteen pounds of gold dust and made them some \$4,000 richer. It was believed that the gold was buried by a miner who died in 1855.

A miner named Denton in June, 1860, was living in a cabin and working a claim near Timbuctoo in Yuba County. One evening, it being necessary to chop a supply of wood for cooking purposes, he cut down an old oak tree that stood near his cabin. On splitting the trunk open, it was found to be hollow a portion of its length. The hollow place contained a buckskin sack full of nuggets that weighed thirty-five pounds and was worth \$7,500. It had, from appearance, been concealed a long time and as no claimant ever showed up, the 192 original owner who hid the sack must have passed away before it was found by Denton.

One of the most interesting incidents told of buried gold is that connected with "Nigger Jim." He was a slave who came to California from one of the Southern States with his master in 1849. They went to the Mokelumne River to mine and located a claim on one of the creeks flowing from the

hills of Calaveras County into the river. In the spring of 1850 the master was accidentally drowned and “Nigger Jim” took possession of the mine, cabin and personal effects, as well as his freedom. Nobody paid any attention to what he did as all were intent on digging their own fortunes. After a time he moved further up the creek, built for himself a substantial cabin, planted a small orchard and cultivated a small garden, raising peanuts, principally, to give to his white folk friends. He had a few chickens, a dog and a gun, and while he occasionally mined in the creek or in some of the ravines, he lived as easy going and careless a life as a negro could enjoy. As the placers became worked out the miners gradually left, and he became, in time, almost the only person living on the creek. He lived alone, a sort of a hermit's life, until early in the '80s, when he appeared wandering about Lancha Plona and Campo Seco, making inquiry of every person he met: “Hab yo' seen Sonny? He gone done me up.” It soon developed that “Nigger Jim” had gone daft and he was taken care of by the authorities. He kept up his refrain about “Sonny” until he passed away, and while his attendants sometimes heard him muttering about the loss of a pile of gold, they considered it the hallucination of a diseased mind. Some time afterward a prominent young attorney of San Francisco learned from a Calaveras County friend of “Nigger Jim's” end and recognized in himself the missing “Sonny” the old 193 darkey was supposed to be dreaming about. When he was a lad seven or eight years of age in '59, his father mined on the creek and the family lived near to “Nigger Jim's” cabin. The boy was given the child name of “Sonny” by his mother and he and “Nigger Jim” became good friends, the boy often visiting the cabin to eat the peanuts that the darkey took pleasure in roasting for him. One evening, shortly before his father moved away from the creek to live elsewhere, he was in “Nigger Jim's” cabin and the old fellow became reminiscent. After talking awhile about old times down South, he disappeared a few minutes and then returned with four large oyster cans filled with nuggets from a half ounce to three or four ounces in weight. These he emptied into a pile on the cabin table and while “Sonny” played jack stones with a few of the nuggets, the old negro went through the details of how and where he found the largest gold lumps and ended by saying he was keeping them to give, before he died, to the person he loved the best in the whole world. At that time his affection centered on “Sonny” and to him he intended to will the wealth piled on the table and plenty more where these came from. They parted,, “Sonny,” with the coming of the responsibilities of life forgot the incident until the death of “Nigger Jim”

brought back the recollection of it. There is no question but that he saw the nuggets, not only that, but he handled them and the mystery now is what became of them. Were the cans stolen and did the shock of finding them gone unhinge the old darkey's intellect or did the inroads of senility cause his memory to fail and be unable to locate his buried treasure? The impression that "Sonny" had taken the gold may have been the result of either of these two conditions. The cabin was carefully searched, the ground around it thoroughly probed but the nuggets could not be found. The oyster cans with their treasure of nuggets may be still hid and 194 will so remain until some lucky person will unexpectedly reveal the hiding place and get the benefit of "Nigger Jim's" frugality and good intentions.

Near Robinson's Ferry in Calaveras County is Jackass Hill. In its heyday six hundred miners dug fortunes out of its auriferous soil. In the '50s one of the first to mine there was a man who was uncommunicative and solitary. No one seemed to know his name or career and his surly manner kept every one at a distance. He lived alone in a cabin of his own unaided construction and labored with a feverish energy in the quest of gold, and it was well known he had been lucky. One morning he was found murdered in his cabin; the ground floor had been dug up, the stone of the fireplace torn out and the whole place thoroughly searched for the sullen man's treasure. Evidently it had not been found and the men who perpetrated the crime were not discovered. Years passed on and the cabin, which nobody cared to occupy, fell by decay to pieces. Fifteen years after the miner had been murdered and the memory of the man and the crime was almost forgotten, a man named Johnson appeared; made a location and built a cabin on the hill. He began to act in a peculiar manner that gave his neighbors an impression he was daft. He was seen frequently in the vicinity of the old cabin of the murdered miner where he professed to be prospecting for a quartz vein. He shunned acquaintance and was morose and sullen whenever spoken to. All at once his manner changed and he was seen no more around the old cabin, but was often noticed in another locality Sitting on a log or rock in a deep reverie, avoiding every one who came near to him. One day, Johnson accosted another miner working on the hill with the request: "Can I go home with you ? I want company." The other miner gave him a courteous invitation to come along 195 and then inquired: "What is bothering you?" "I cannot tell you," replied Johnson, dropping his head and looking at the

ground and he remained silent until the cabin was reached. Soon afterward, Johnson informed his companion that he was going to leave the place forever. "It is accursed," said he. "What ails you man?" asked his listener. "I'll tell you. I've got to tell it to somebody," answered Johnson and he grew very much agitated: "Do you know anything of the man who was murdered in that cabin at the bottom of the hill years ago? Well, the men who killed him did not find his gold." "My God, man! You did not have a hand in that crime, did you?" asked his listener. "No, no," exclaimed Johnson, "but out in Nevada I met a man and we got to bunking together. One day he got caved on and we got him out in a dying condition. Before he died he confessed to me that he and another man had committed the murder and that he knew the victim's gold was still buried about the cabin. The thing haunted me day and night and I had to come here and search for it. I searched and searched until discouraged and was about to give it up when I found it by accident. It was not as much as I expected, ten or twelve thousand dollars worth, perhaps more, and it was buried in an old pan. I waited until dark and then carried the pan to my cabin. I set it down on the table while I made a fire to cook my supper. After the fire was started, I looked at the pan of gold and the gold was bleeding. I, after a time, mustered up courage to touch the gold and there was no mistake there was gore upon it. Then I washed it clean and sat down and watched it for a time. It did not bleed again and I got my supper. After finishing, I again looked at the gold and my heart stood still. Every nugget was oozing a drop of blood! At last in terror and desperation I carried the pan back to its former hiding place and buried it. I 196 have had no peace of mind since." Johnson went crazy and died in the Stockton Asylum.

In 1853 a Swiss named Schmidt was working a claim near Civil Usage, a locality about a mile and a half from Auburn. He occupied a cabin built on the bank of the ravine, near his claim. He worked steadily, was frugal and believed to have saved considerable gold dust. One day he was found dead in his claim, shot from behind, and as nothing of value was found about his person or cabin, it was believed he had been robbed, after being killed.

In March, 1856, a Chinaman took possession of the deserted cabin intending to mine the ravine. While taking stones out of the mud and stone chimney that Schmidt had built, in order to fix a fire place to boil his rice over, he pried up a large stone, which exposed a cavity beneath, in which

was a buckskin sack containing the gold dust Schmidt had put away. According to the estimate made by a miner who saw the sack, it must have contained about \$8,000 worth. Before the public administrator heard of it and could get a move on the Chinaman, he was a non est man. It was believed Schmidt was murdered by a Chileno, who was soon afterward lynched for another crime in Amador County. This incident shows in a very conspicuous way the cosmopolitan population of California at that time. Here was a man born within sight of the Alps, in Central Europe, shot by a man born on the western slope of the Andes in South America, whose acts benefited a man born where the Great Chinese Wall casts its shadow in Asia, and who was being chased by a county official born in Missouri in the center of North America; all here for the single purpose of getting gold.

A traveler through the placer mining district remarked this in a letter he wrote detailing his experience in a mining town where he arrived in the evening 1849 and desired something to eat. He was attracted by a large sign reading "French Restaurant," also "Meals at all hours." Entering, he found the place run by a Mulatto from Louisiana, who rented the premises from a Jew; employed a Chinese cook and a young Austrian as a waiter. He found being served, a Scotchman, an Irishman and a Welshman who was accompanied by his native son. The traveler was from Ohio. He ascertained that meat was furnished by a Dutch butcher; vegetables by an Italian gardener; bread by a French baker; milk by a Portuguese milkman and a Mexican woman did up the laundry.

## **A BIG POKER GAME**

Many a fortune was found in the placers that was lost at the gambling table. One of the biggest poker games played during this placer mining period was at Coyoteville, Nevada County, during the last week of October, 1851. Four miners who were working and were the owners of the richest placer claim in that locality, started a poker game at \$5 "ante" and "passing the buck" to pass the evening away. It grew in proportions until finally it was being played at \$25 "ante" for each and no limit. When the game ended, Jack Breedlove had won all the stakes which consisted of coin and gold dust amounting to \$22,000. After a rest the game was resumed upon a basis of valuation of their claim at \$40,000, in four shares of \$10,000 each. When this sitting ended, Zeke Roubier had

won back \$8,000 and held his interest in the claim. Breedlove still retained \$14,000 of the coin and gold and had the half interest in the claim of the other two players making his winning \$34,000, minus what he started with. He offered the two losers, employment in the claim, at an ounce a day, but they declined to stay, and rolling up their blankets and some personal effects they went their way to find new diggings and recoup.

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Incidents We went down the hill Into Downieville To pick our pile; We came up the hill Out of Downieville Without a shirt or tile.

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## INCIDENTS

In '49, on Carson Creek, a miner died and his friends arranged to bury him as decently as possible.

A grave was dug near his cabin; his coffin was made with pine boards, planed, and stained black.

There was no minister on the Creek, so a clerical looking miner, who had been nicknamed the “Deacon:” and who had a bible and some religious books, was asked to officiate.

The friends of the deceased gathered around the grave in the afternoon. The “Deacon” spoke an eulogy; read from the epistle of St. Paul and then knelt in prayer. While he prayed, one of the miners, with downcast eyes, who was standing upon some of the dirt thrown out in the digging of the grave, saw a nugget sticking out of the dirt. He stooped and picked it up just as the “Deacon” said Amen! The attention of some of the other miners was attracted to the nugget finder and this caused the “Deacon” to look that way. “What's that” interrogated he. “Gold! Gold! Hold on boys! Postpone this funeral until we locate our claims.” And locate they did. The embryo graveyard proved to be a rich placer. Another grave was dug where ground did not appear to show a “color” and the funeral ceremonies were finished there.

In 1850 a man and his wife kept a hotel in Sacramento. It was a popular stopping place for the miners visiting that city. Many of them left, from time to time, deposits of gold dust with the

proprietor. He died in 1851 and in his safe was found over \$50,000 in packages of different sizes, left with him by a score or more of miners. The widow succeeded in locating the owners and delivering all the packages except one. This contained over \$3,000 in gold dust. As time went on and the owner did not appear, it was concluded he, too, had passed to the great beyond and the widow could call the gold her own. But, the lady kept the package intact, and probably, was not surprised in 1859, when the owner appeared and asked for his deposit. He had been in Trinity County, isolated and so far away, he had not heard of any changes. He was surprised to find that death had taken away the custodian and fire had destroyed the place where, nine years previously, he had deposited his gold dust. He received his deposit from the lady, who had faithfully kept it, with the same nonchalance as though he had left it only the day before.

The son of a Southern planter in 1850 came to Placerville with an old slave, as a sort of a bodyguard, to view the situation. One night the old darkey dreamed that there was a rich deposit of nuggets beneath the cabin of a neighbor and he seriously told his master of his dream. The young Southerner laughed it off. A few nights afterward, the old darkey had the same dream again. He became so impressed with it that he insisted on his young master giving it attention and acting upon it. The easy going young Southerner bought the ground, more to satisfy the whim of his bodyguard than any other reason, and then set him to work developing his dream. The first day of work yielded \$20,000 and that was probably about one-half of what they took out of the ground he purchased as dreamland.

What is in a name? Good luck is sometimes connected with one.

In the '50s two miners named Given and Stickney entered into a partnership to work a claim on the 201 American River in El Dorado County. They had to sink much deeper than they had expected to do to reach pay dirt and when they got down about forty feet, Given began to get discouraged. The increase of the flow of water was steady and caused a continual caving of the sides of the hole and other difficulties arising, the partners began to dispute and finally quarreled. Given now concluded to quit. This caused Stickney to express his feelings in this ultimatum: "Your name is Given and

you are going to be true to the sound of it and *Give in*. My name is Stickney and I'm going to stick.” And he did. He finally succeeded in sinking the hole a short distance deeper and struck it rich.

A miner named John Marshall in August, 1854, working on Sherlock Creek in Mariposa County, while removing a pile of rocks, by hand, which was in the way of his sluice box line, picked up a seven pound nugget. This, owing to it having been incrustated with a black substance of some kind, he had previously cast aside as a rock when it had been ground sluiced from a bank. The find netted him \$1,500.

A miner named Gibson in July, 1859, was working a claim near Vallecito. In clearing his sluices of rocks, he took out what looked like a grayish piece of stone and he was about to cast it aside when its heavy weight attracted his attention. It proved to be a nugget weighing six pounds and worth over \$1,200. It was covered with a hard grayish cement and had to be vigorously rubbed against other rocks before the glitter of the gold was seen.

## 202

In April, 1855, a young man named William Graham was in Mariposa. He was not doing anything and decided to try his luck in Sonora. Owing to the low ebb his finances were in, he had to walk. When on a hill about two miles from the town, at the head of Algerine Gulch, he sat down on a large stone to rest a few minutes, While kicking one of his heels into the dirt he noticed a small piece of gold come into view. It was afterward sold for \$2. The finding of it gave to him the idea there might be more of the same kind nearby. He went down into Sonora, procured a pick and pan, and returned to the head of the gulch. He dug out six pounds of gold that afternoon and started an excitement that opened up a lot of good paying claims on Algerine Gulch, but, as is not usually the case with discoverers, his own proved to be one of the best.

During the summer of 1857, three young men, miners at Iowa Hill, named J. C. Coleman, J. H. Neff and Godfrey Rudolph had frequent arguments and disputes as to where the rich channel, being mined at Iowa Hill, came from. It finally led to their having a survey made in November, 1857, which resulted in the organization, on Thanksgiving Day, of the Morning Star Mine. The consensus



of opinion, from their constant argument and disputes was, that the channel came across from Indian Canyon, opposite Iowa Hill. A tunnel was started for the deposit of auriferous gravel lying in the bed of the buried ancient stream. The tunnel now is over four thousand feet in length; it is beneath the ancient channel. Over one hundred dividends have been paid. Two million dollars in gold have been taken out. The fortune enjoyed by Jake Neff, as he was popularly known, came from his love of argument and his fixed opinions as to where the ancient buried channel lay opposite Iowa Hill.

## 203

The vicissitudes of placer mining are well shown in the history of the "Deadman's" claim, near North San Juan, Nevada County. This claim was located in January, 1853, by two miners named Chadbourne and West. In order to get the required fall to carry off the tailings it was necessary to dig a deep cut. They were working in this in March, '53, when the bank on one side caved in and buried them under many tons of earth. They were not missed for several days, but, when it became apparent they had been caved upon, all the miners in the vicinity worked in shifts for several days getting their bodies out. Each owner had a brother to whom their estates went and these brothers sold the claim to Louis Buhring and Peter Lassen for \$300. The new owners worked it without hardly more than making expenses. This was on account of the variable supply of water causing frequent periods of enforced idleness. They sold, from time to time, interests to others, until in 1856 there were seven partners. Then a ditch company brought in an ample supply of water for the mine to be opened and worked in a systematic manner. In August, 1857, the partners began working it economically and steadily and from that date until December, 1858, a period of sixteen months, they took out \$156,300.

This made a net sum of over \$20,000 for each partner. The claim was eighty feet wide, one hundred and eighty feet long and averaged one hundred feet deep. In 1860 all that remained was the bedrock surface cleaned of its alluvial covering and hidden wealth.

**THE DESERTED PLACER** Gone is the sluice, the pick and the pan; Gone is the cabin; gone is the man; Gone are the nuggets that on the bedrock lay, In the coin of the realm their glint will stay; Over the bedrock bare, the tailing piles are spread,

204

No more to rattle 'neath the miner's heavy tread. No sound now is heard, save, the chatter of the jay And the rap, rap, of the woodpecker, not a-far away, Gone is the life, the strife, that greed for gold impels, And all around, over all, a solemn stillness dwells.

In 1853 a miner in Coon Hollow, El Dorado County, had a claim which he delved in for a year and went broke. The location did not pay expenses and he had to seek better diggings. The claim he abandoned, had a bad reputation and nobody cared to take it. He wandered around with the usual ups and downs for four years when he drifted back to Coon Hollow. Renewing old acquaintance, he learned from the miners working thereabout, that his old claim had remained untouched through the years he had been absent. A desire to try his luck in it again grew so strong that he resumed operations where he had left off. Two days after he had begun work, he struck a pay streak from which he took \$450 and he averaged over an ounce a day for more than a year afterward from the once abandoned claim.

Near where Indian Creek joins the San Antonio in Calaveras County, a marble ledge crosses the latter stream and the ledge is from seventy-five to one hundred feet in width. The bed of the stream and its banks paid well below the marble vein, but every company that mined across it, regretted the expense and loss of time the poor results gave them. The smooth surface of the marble ledge held no more gold than a graveyard monument.

A man named Davis, who kept a store near this point, became obsessed with the idea that the gold in the San Antonio below the marble vein came from the erosion of that vein and if the place could be found, 205 in the vein that held the gold, that was concealed beneath the hill, it would yield an enormous quantity of gold. He probably had an idea it held a decomposed strata containing gold like the decomposed quartz seams. He employed men and searched for the source of the gold in

the barren marble until, nearly broke and disgusted, he had to give up. About the time he quit, three miners sunk a hole at the downstream side of the marble vein on the opposite side of the stream. They went down ten or twelve feet, making fair pay, then got below the waterline and, not caring to go to the expense of putting in 'a pump, abandoned the claim. A short time afterward, three jolly tars navigating the San Antonio on foot, came along, and finding a hole already sunk, took possession. A few feet of water did not bother them and they worked along taking out enough pay each day to keep them in grog and grub. As the water kept getting deeper and deeper, they took turns in stripping off their clothes, diving to the bottom with a pan and bringing up, between breathing spells, a few handfuls of pay dirt. They had worked this way over two months when a miner named Thompson chanced to stop and watch their operations. On seeing their clean up for the day he offered them \$500 for their claim, which they accepted. Thompson took a miner named Chase into partnership. They put up a one-horse whim and a hopper to dump the dirt in and 'began work. They found one of the richest claims on the creek. The sailors went to San Andreas and had a glorious spree. When broke, they returned and opened a claim above the marble vein, which paid them an ounce a day, when they chose to work it. Not only that, but good pay was found in the bank over the marble vein and had Davis made his search for the source of the gold supply on that side of the stream, instead of where he did, while, he would not have found the source of the gold, he would have found something equally as good.

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The Tuolumne River makes a long gradual bend around Indian Bar. The bar had been worked from 1849 until 1859 continuously. Three different buried channels, of great richness, had been found. The last one was a very expensive proposition to work, requiring the sluicing off of thirty to forty feet of earth to reach pay dirt and now, in November, 1859, a high ledge of rock on one side and the river on the other, with exposed bedrock and piles of tailings between and a few Chinese, the scavengers of the placers, working there, was all that was left of the once populous and busy bar.

Pat Givens, an experienced miner, passing that point on a November morning in '59, took a view of the bar, the river, and the hills. He came to the conclusion the river once ran above the high ledge exposed and that a buried channel was covered by the hills. He tried to induce other miners to join

him in a search for it, but he was ridiculed and laughed at by every one he approached. Then his Irish dander got up and he went after it alone. He started a tunnel into the hill above the high ledge and at a distance of thirty feet struck gravel that paid him twenty-five ounces for his first day's work. He then had no difficulty in getting partners and three miners named Jones, Manning and Deary joined him. For the next month they were taking out \$30 a day to the man and seven other companies were located along the hill tunneling for the buried channel Pat Givens had found.

John Sykes was a typical hard luck prospector. He began in 1850 by going up the American and locating a claim on Volcano Bar. Here he sank a hole four or five feet deep, and not getting an ounce a day was very much disgruntled. Then he heard of rich diggings on the Yuba and off he went to the new gold fields. About a month afterward a man named Webster, looking for a claim, commenced work where Sykes left off 207 and soon found a pay streak from which he washed a fortune in a few months. His claim, showing signs of petering, he quit and went home to the Eastern States

#### “OLD JEREMIAH,” THE LAMENTER

with his gold dust. A year later four miners opened it up again and took from it several thousands of dollars. In the meantime, Sykes had reached Durgan Flat, near 208 Downieville, a locality from which over \$4,000,000 was dug in ten years, and he got a claim there. He sank a hole as deep as a man working alone could dare to go and obtained such poor results that he sold it to three miners for \$100. They sunk the hole only two feet deeper when they began to take out the gold in bucketsful and cleaned up \$60,000 in sixty days. Sykes, in lamenting his lack of luck, declared that the next time he started to sink a hole, he would not stop until he struck bedrock or hell.

He finally got located at Weaverville, Trinity County, and started a hole which he endeavored to sink as deep as he once declared he would, but the expenses took his last dollar, all he could borrow and eventually made him a bankrupt without striking anything. But, Sykes had muscle and experience that made his services in demand at regular pay by miners who experienced better luck than he, and after ten years of ups and downs during the placer mining days, John was working for pay by the day.

**LAMENT OF AN OLD PROSPECTOR** From the early days of '49, Without the aid of whiskey,  
gin or wine, In every rush, I've led the line Since I started out to mine. With my jack, my pick  
and pan I was always there when the fun began, And I asked no odds of any man When I started  
out to mine. To Mariposa, quick, I first did fly! Then in Columbia, I made an earnest try, And up  
Mokelumne Hill, I climbed, quite spry, In the days of '49.

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In Jackson town, I worked a wicked week, Then began to dig on Sutter Creek; Of Drytown, I hate  
to think or speak, Since I started out to mine. At Fiddletown, I said a bitter curse; At Hangtown,  
I went from bad to worse; At Auburn, I couldn't fill my purse, When I started out to mine. At  
Whiskey Flat, I was good and tight; At Rough and Ready, I had a fight; At You Bet, in jail, I spent  
a night, In the days of '49. Then down the Yuba, so swift and deep; Up Grizzly Hill, so rough and  
steep; And at Kanaka Creek, I 'ye took a peep Since I started out to mine. Then up to Downieville,  
where gold once grew, I hiked. Then down I came with a jolly crew, To join a rush on Timbuctoo,  
When I started out to mine. I've washed the Mendocino golden sand; On the Trinity, I've sluiced  
and panned; From Shasta's snowy peak I viewed the land, In the days of '49. Once I thought Yreka  
filled the bill; Then I heard of gold at Sutter's Mill In Yankee Jim, on Iowa Hill; Now I've mined  
and paced from place to place; I've joined every rush of the human race; But I've never looked a  
nugget in the face, Since the days of '49.

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A minister, travelling along a trail in Tuolumne County in '52, came upon the unusual sight, at  
that time, of a gray-haired prospector. He was seated upon a stone in the shade of a big oak tree  
on a small flat near the mouth of a gulch. He had a tale of hard luck to tell when the minister had  
made the usual inquiries of the period. He had prospected here and there, hardly making grub,  
while others had found thousands to squander. He was disappointed, despondent and homesick  
and despaired of ever making the pile he came for and which would enable him to return “home” a  
happy man. The minister endeavored to cheer him with hopeful words and finally, as he prepared  
to go, said: “As you seem to be a firm believer in luck, why don't you turn over that stone you  
are sitting on just for luck?. I've seen gold found in less likelier places than this.” “Well,” replied

the old prospector, rising up, “as you have, suggested it, I'll do it just for luck.” Taking his pick, after a few unsuccessful efforts, he brought the stone out of its bed and turned it over. There in the hole was the yellow glint of nearly a pound of small nuggets about the size of pumpkin seeds. The bent back became straight, the despondent expression gave way in an instant to one 'of hope and expectancy, and with the vigor of a youth, as the minister departed, the old prospector began to dig at his first streak of good luck.

### **DOW'S FLAT** (1856) (By F. BRET HARTE.)

“Dow's Flat.” That's its name; And I reckon that you Are a stranger? The same? Well, I thought it was true-- For thar isn't a man on the river as can't spot the place at first view.

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It was called after Dow, Which the same was an ass; And to the how That the thing kem to pass-- Just tie up your hoss to the buckeye, and sit ye down here in the grass.

You see, this yer Dow Hed the worst kind of luck; He slipped up somehow On each thing thet he struck, Why, if he straddled thet fence rod, the derved thing 'ud get up and buck.

He mined on the bar Till he couldn't pay rates; He was smashed by a car, When he tunneled with Bates; And right on the top of his trouble kem his wife and five kids from the States.

It was rough, mighty rough; But the boys stood by, And they brought him stuff For a house, on the sly; And the old woman-Well, she did washing and took on when no one was nigh.

But this yer luck of Dow's Was so powerful mean That the spring near his house Dried right up on the green; And he sunk forty feet down for water, but nary a drop was seen.

Then the bar petered out, And the boys wouldn't stay;

212

And the chills got about, And his wife fell away; But Dow in his well kept a peggin' in his usual  
ridikilous way.

One day--it was June And a year ago, jest-- This Dow kem at noon To his work like the rest, With a  
shovel and pick on his shoulder, and a derringer hid in his breast.

He goes to the well, And he stands on the brink And he stops for a spell Jest to listen and think; For  
the sun in his eyes (jest like this, sir!) you see, kinder made the cuss blink.

His two ragged gals In the gulch were at play, And a gown that was Sal's Kinder flapped on a bay;  
Not much for a man to be leavin', but his all--as I've heer'd the folks say.

And--that's a peart hoss Thet you've got, ain't it now? What might be her cost? Eh? Oh!--Well,  
then, Dow-- Let's see--Well, that forty-foot grave wasn't his, sir, that day, anyhow.

For a blow of his pick Sorter caved in the side, And he looked and turned sick, Then he trembled  
and cried,

213

For you see the dern cuss had struck--“water?” Beg your parding, young man, there you lied.

It was gold--in the quartz, And it ran all alike; And I reckon five oughts Was the worth of that  
strike; And that house with the coopilou's his'n--which the same isn't bad for a Pike.

That's why it's Dow's Flat; And the thing of it is That he kinder got that Through sheer  
contrairiness; For 'twas water the derved cuss was seekin' and his luck made him certain to miss.

Stillwater Creek on the east side of the Sacramento River, in Shasta County, proved a great  
disappointment to the miners who worked there in the '50s. It showed excellent prospects when the  
dirt was panned but the gold was flakey and so light and feathery it could not be saved by the rocker  
or the sluice box methods then in use. Nobody seemed able to solve the problem and remove the  
trouble until an old negro tried a claim on the creek. He went up on the hillside and found a hollow

log which he rolled down into the bed of the creek. He fixed it so he could fill it with pay dirt and then run a stream of water through, while he rolled it from side to side about half turning it over. It held the gold all right and when he wanted to clean up, he would up end the log and wash its contents into a batea. He gathered the gold by ounces while others were cursing their luck.

## 214

A man named Johnson had a claim on Temperance Flat, in Placer County, which was worked in 1858 and was found to be an old Indian burying ground. A number of skeletons were washed out and large quantities of shell ornaments found. The dirt was very rich in gold, some of it yielding as high as \$80 to a pan and the aborigines interred there were literally buried in gold dust.

In June, 1855, in a claim near Springfield, Tuolumne County, a number of Indian acorn mortars were found ten feet below the surface. In one was half an ounce of gold dust. Deer horns and skulls were also found. In 1853 Frederick Eaholtz found in his mine a stone mortar and pestle forty feet below the surface, near Cherokee, in Butte County. It was buried in the blue gravel of an ancient stream. This blue gravel deposit does not come near to the surface and it extends under Sugar Loaf Hill and the lava formed Table Mountain near Oroville. This shows the stream was in existence before the lava flow made the elevations mentioned. While stone mortars, the relics of the aborigines, are frequently found deep down in the beds of these buried streams, this one received the attention of Mr. Amos Bowman, a man of scientific attainments and competent to investigate, who endeavored to estimate the years, or centuries rather, this mortar had been imbedded in its covering of cement. His conclusions were that at the time it was abandoned by its owner, it was upon the seashore and the beach in Butte County was then washed by the Pacific Ocean. This was before the peaks of the Marysville Buttes showed above the surface of the sea and the lava flow that covered the beds of the ancient streams had been poured forth by volcanic action. From the large number of mortars found, it was apparent, a numerous tribe lived in this vicinity, and that tropical vegetation grew in 215 a semi-tropical clime. From the different stratas or gravel exposed in the banks of the hydraulic mines and the depths of erosions in the canyons of the rivers of the present day and estimating, from the eras each has taken to form its physical characteristics, he estimated not less than 180,000 years have elapsed since this mortar lost its owner. As it had been in use for



many a year previous for grinding the acorns and nuts of that period, it is possible it was in use 200,000 years ago.

In 1855 two miners near Mokelumne Hill began working a claim on a fiat in the center of which stood a noble white oak tree. They worked around it until two years later it stood upon a pedestal of earth; its roots cut away as near to its trunk as the miners dared to go without causing it to fall. It was not from sentiment that it was allowed to stand, for there is no sentiment wasted in mining for gold, but it was the expense in labor its broken trunk and limbs would cause to remove, if it fell and covered any unwashed part of the claim that made them careful and allowed it to remain standing. Finally, in December, 1857, a gale blew with such pressure the old oak could not stand against it and it fell. In the morning the miners saw it lying prostrate on the bedrock; its sturdy limbs fractured and its trunk broken in pieces by its fall. Uplifted, held by its roots several feet in the air and washed free of dirt by the showers that fell during the night, there glittered in the sunlight a five-pound nugget worth a thousand dollars. Had the old oak written a farewell message of "I forgive you," to its despoilers, it could not have said more.

At Dutch Flat in 1858 a miner struck a strata of earth that was different from anything he had ever seen before, and considering it worthless, he shovelled a large quantity of it out of the way. One day he put a handful of it in his overall pocket as he was going to his cabin for his noonday meal and there he dropped it in a tin dipper and washed it out in a bucket of water. It yielded \$8 in gold dust and he found he had struck it rich for some time without knowing the fact.

At Bath, Placer County, in 1857, two mining companies were working tunnel claims adjoining each other and running some distance into a hill. Their dump boxes and sluice ways were very close together and on the same level. The Golden Gate Company concluded to increase its output by putting on a night shift and to do this had to employ a force of "greenhorns." The Golden Gate people neglected to instruct the gang where to dump the gravel they brought out of the tunnel during the night and this resulted in fifteen carloads of gravel going into the other company's dump box, where the sluice head of water, running steadily, quickly washed it out of sight. This company, working only during the day time, did not discover the error, and when, after extracting only four

carloads of gravel as that day's work, they cleaned up from their sluice boxes over \$5000, their elation went beyond reasonable bounds. They believed they had struck it rich and the value of their claim increased in jumps as the result of that day's washing became known. On the other hand, the owners of the Golden Gate Company, finding that, with the addition of a night force and the supposed washing of a double amount of gravel the yield was less than before, when a day shift only was working, had their spirits drooping and feared their claim was petering. It was several days before the mistake was discovered, but the financial gains and losses made through the purchase, and sale of interests by those supposed to be "on the inside" could never be rectified.

Wm. H. Parks, after whom Park's Bar on the Yuba was named, arrived in California a young man, but

"I REMEMBER"

soon developed the executive ability that made him an employer of others in opening up large enterprises. He had a claim on the Yuba in which he employed a large force of miners and among the number he noticed one young fellow who always seemed to have a large quid of tobacco in his mouth and was an inveterate spitter. One evening at the Park's Bar store, in conversation with those gathered there, Parks remarked that he believed Bill was one of the biggest tobacco chewers on the Bar. The storekeeper drawled out: "He never had a chaw of tobacco in his mouth in his life." Surprised, Parks asked him how he knew, and was told that the man had never bought a plug of tobacco. The next morning Parks, passing through this claim, came up to this young fellow and noticing his cheek puffed out apparently by a larger quid than usual, stopped and remarked: "Bill, that's a mighty big quid you have in your mouth. Let's see it?" There was a stare of thunderstruck astonishment for a moment, then a gulp, followed by a gurgle and the man fell prostrate, strangling to death. He had a large nugget concealed in his mouth and had tried to swallow it. It was too large for his gullet and it had stuck in his throat, shutting off his breath at his windpipe. It took several minutes to get the nugget out of his throat and he came very near strangling to death.

## **RECOLLECTIONS OF AN OLD MINER**

I remember, I remember, where once I used to mine, My cabin still is standing beneath a sugar pine,  
From daylight in the morning till the sun went out of sight, Alone, I used to dig for gold, and mend  
my clothes at night. I remember, I remember, when grub was very high, And miners were very poor  
and couldn't afford to buy;

219

We had to live on pork and beans, with little pork, indeed, And with enough to grease the frying  
pan, we thought we'd struck a lead. I remember, I remember, when the Yuba used to pay, With  
nothing but a rocker, a pound and more a day; We used to think 'twould always last, and it would  
with perfect ease If Uncle Sam had only stopped the coming of Chinese. (*Old Song.*)

A Frenchman, working a claim at Tunnel Hill, Calaveras County, in May, 1858, refused to pay the  
foreign miner's license of \$4 a month and a deputy sheriff sold his claim, after attachment, for \$27.  
It was bought by a man named Gwyn Raymond. The first day he worked it, he cleaned up \$3700.  
The next day the Frenchman appeared with a sobbing heart and paid Raymond \$2700 for it to buy it  
back.

At Vallecito, Calaveras County, a strike in 1859, caused a rush of locators who began staking out  
claims. One of the locators, in filing his notice, found he needed another name to complete the law  
requirements for the number of feet he was filing on. Seeing a man named Coon passing by, whom  
he supposed was there also for the purpose of locating a claim, he put Coon's name on his notice.  
Six thousand dollars was taken out of the claim in a few days and Coon did not know he had an  
interest in it until his dividend was paid.

Personal appearances did not always indicate the man who had the gold dust in his pocket in the  
'50s. 220 One day in April, 1856, a patriarchal-looking miner, with a straggling growth of hair and  
beard, unkempt and unwashed, with horny hands and a battered old felt hat on his head, sauntered  
into Wells, Fargo & Company's office in Mariposa and made inquiries of the agent how to ship gold  
dust to a town in the Atlantic States. On being given the necessary information, he politely thanked  
the agent and departed. Two days later he came in with several bags of gold lust in the pockets of

his garments and shipped \$75,000 worth to his home in the East. He then quietly remarked that he would have to go to Shasta and dig up some more he had buried up there before he could take the steamer and depart for the East.

Goats and cattle have a penchant for “chewing the rag” and any piece of buckskin that falls across their way. It is perhaps due to the salty taste these substances have that stimulates the liking. A butcher in Calaveras County found in the paunch of a steer he slaughtered several \$5 pieces and a few nuggets. They had probably been swallowed in a buckskin purse dropped by some one crossing the grazing grounds of the animal.

Near Yreka, Siskiyou County, in 1855, a miner felled a tree near his cabin to obtain his supply of firewood. One afternoon he took off his coat and tossed it upon a stump and proceeded to chop a quantity of sticks from the tree. Out of the pocket of the coat stuck the end of a buckskin sack containing over \$500 worth of gold dust. An old milch cow, pastured in the vicinity, finally grazed up to where the coat was lying and the miner glanced at the cow just in time to see his sack of gold disappear in the cow's mouth. As a bovine swallows and ruminates afterward, there was 221 no chance for him to prevent the animal gulping it down. He drove her over to her owner's corral and there found that she was the dearest old animal in the world, and, on account of her being such a prolific milk producer, she had not an equal in the State. Of course, he had to buy her so as to keep possession of his gold and it is said that she cost him \$150. He kept her corralled for ten days, during which time he tried in every possible way to effect a gold cure without success and then he had to kill her. The gold was found in her paunch undamaged but the buckskin sack had been digested.

Many of the men who went into the storekeeping business in the '50s had no previous experience and knew little about the goods they were buying and selling. One of these novices started a store in Hangtown soon after it came into existence and one day received in a shipment of goods, from Sacramento, a barrel that contained something he considered had spoiled. Compared with the tub butter and dried codfish, it was in an aristocracy of smell all its own. He rolled the barrel outside of his store and left it in the pile of empty boxes, barrels and bottles that was accumulating there. A

few days afterwards, a Dutchman, mining on Weber Creek, came in and said: "I want somedings you got outside. I vould valk ten miles to get it." "What is it?" asked the storekeeper. "Come mit me. I show you." He took the storekeeper to the rubbish pile and pointing to the discarded barrel, said: "Dot vas it." "Why," said the storekeeper, "that stuff is spoiled." "Nix," replied the Dutchman, "I vas know him better as you. Shust bust him open and I show you." When the head was knocked in, the contents proved to be a fine article of sauerkraut, put up in Holland and shipped to California. It was retailed at \$1 a 222 pound and brought Dutch trade to the store from ten miles around. "Hans," asked the storekeeper, "how in the world did you know that was a barrel of sauerkraut?" To which Hans replied: "Vell, I shust nose it. Dot vas all." Another amusing thing connected with it was that this merchant, finding he had an article that commanded a profitable trade, ordered a supply from the wholesaler in Sacramento, who replied he did not have any of the article on hand and never carried it, so, it is probable, the barrel was a maverick that every Yankee merchant, who came in contact with it, considered a dead weight and passed it on to get rid of it.

Two miners in 1859 were travelling the trail from White Rock to Placerville when they came to a ravine two miles from the -town. There three men were picking and shovelling dirt into a line of sluice boxes while a foppish-looking individual stood upon the bank directing operations. He was dressed in what then was fashionable attire. A part of this was a ruffled bosom white shirt, a yellow vest; a black silk cravat wound twice around a stiff white collar and on his head a tall plug hat. The two miners on ascertaining he was the owner of the claim; was too proud to work it himself and employed the three men to do it for him, were at first disgusted and then became angry as they discussed the situation. According to their logic a man who would not work in a placer claim himself, should not own one. After considerable argument, threats and dicker, they bought the claim and ordered the foppish owner to clear out. They then made a gift of the claim to the three men who were working in it. These men were from Georgia and in six weeks' time cleaned up enough to start back to their Georgia homes with over \$6000 apiece. 223 Beyond their calling each other "Tom" and "Dick" they never learned the names of their benefactors.

In the spring of 1850 a woman on Weber Creek was engaged in assisting her husband in working a claim. One afternoon, after a heavy rainstorm, she wandered up a small ravine and noticed a piece

of gold that had been washed into view by the freshet. She tried to pick it up, but it was too firmly imbedded for her fingers to dislodge it. She returned to her cabin and getting a table fork went back to the ravine and dug out a thirteen-pound nugget. It was kidney shape. Being of a jocosé nature, she did not tell her husband of her find, but at supper time she slipped it into the frying pan and served him a fried nugget worth nearly \$3000 for his supper.

A miner, living at Jamison, in 1859, on a Sunday morning, had a tiff with his wife regarding how he was to spend the day. She desired him to give it a religious observance. She, finally went either to church, or to talk to a neighbor, while he took a stroll down the creek called Little Fraser. To vent his spiteful feelings, he began picking up stones and throwing them at bluejays, squirrels or any other animate object that came within range. Intending to pick up a stone from a pile of tailings that he was walking over, he got hold of a nugget weighing nearly seven pounds and worth about \$1500.

A man named Dunn was mining on Honcut Creek and on March 9, 1856, he found in his claim a nugget weighing eight pounds and worth \$1700. On reaching home that evening he found Mrs. Dunn ill with an expected event about to happen. A son was born before midnight and when placed in the scales with the nugget they were so evenly balanced that for a 224 moment it could not be told which might be slightly the heavier, but, a yell and a wriggle from the native son showed that he was heavier than the nugget and consequently worth more than his weight in gold.

In July, 1857, a miner, working his claim on Middle Bar on the Mokelumne River, noticed a prospector with a burro laden with his tools, cooking utensils and blankets passing from the Amador to the Calaveras side and disappear up the trail to Mokelumne Hill. An hour or two afterward he started for the Hill to get some supplies and about a mile from the Bar found lying, by the side of the trail, a pair of boots. Having need of the pair, he hid them in the brush and on his return took them to his cabin. He began wearing them to work in his claim, but they were heavily double-soled and it tired his feet so much lifting their extra weight, that he had to discontinue their use and they were thrown aside into a corner of his cabin where they lay undisturbed a couple of weeks. One night he picked up one of the boots and on examining it found the extra sole, instead of being pegged or nailed on, was fastened by several small brass screws. Thinking, to make them

serviceable by removing the extra sole, he, using his jack-knife for a screwdriver, removed the screws. When the sole dropped off, ten \$20 gold pieces fell on the cabin floor with it. The other boot, treated the same way, yielded an equal number of double eagles. The old prospector, who lost them, evidently fearing he would be robbed, had concealed his wealth in this way only to lose it, as the finder and the loser never met each other again.

Four Chinamen bought a partially-worked out placer claim in 1857 in Long Hollow, near Round 225 Tent, Nevada County, for a few hundred dollars. After working it for a few days, they struck a pocket that yielded them \$4000 in two days. This was as long as they were allowed to own it. There was such a rush of white men to the place that the Celestials considered themselves fortunate to get away in safety with their tails hanging behind them.

There was an old woman, she had three sons; Joshua, James and John. Josh was hung, James was drowned, John was lost and never was found, And that was the end of the three sons, Joshua, James and John. Chorus John I. Sherwood John I. Sherwood John I. Sherwood is going home and gone.

This was a popular song with the placer miners of the '50s and sung with “vim and vinegar” in Methodist long meter from Yreka to Mariposa whenever a gathering of miners, in a jovial mood, occurred. It seems to have originated at Nevada City and was first sung by a leading young lawyer there under unique circumstances.

There was a Fourth of July celebration in 1850 in Nevada City that brought to the town a few thousand miners from the river, creeks and gulches of that section. Placards about the town announced that there would be a fight in a pen to be erected near Centerville (now Grass Valley) in the afternoon between a ferocious grizzly bear and the champion kicking jackass of California, and a big crowd went there from Nevada City in search of the excitement. The jackass it was claimed had whipped a bull in Sonora; 226

#### NEVADA CITY, CAL., IN THE '50S

227 killed another in San Andreas; knocked out a California lion in Hangtown, and had been brought to Nevada County to meet the grizzly. A ring had been made with pine stakes driven into

the ground and fastened with pieces of rawhide. An inclosure had been made with small pine trees and chaparral piled around it and secured with ropes. An admission fee of \$2 was charged and about two thousand paid and entered the inclosure. A log cage concealed the grizzly, while the jackass was tied to a stake and was contentedly nibbling grass in the ring. When the cage door was opened, to the great disappointment of the audience, the grizzly did not make its expected wicked rush. Finally, after considerable poking with a pole, the lurking grizzly loitered out of the cage and proved to be a medium-sized Cinnamon bear. It seemed to be frightened at the crowd, but when he saw the jackass, he appeared to recognize an old acquaintance and with a smile of recognition on his jaws moved leisurely toward him. The jackass was now suspicious and when the bear got close enough he suddenly whirled around and delivered, with both hind hoofs, a thundering whack in the ribs. The bear rolled over twice then got on his feet. One jump took him out of the ring and another over the brush fence of the inclosure. He was safely out of sight in the chaparral before any spectator could draw his gun and fire at him. The jackass resumed his nibbling of the grass, while the crowd started a movement to lynch the fakers, but they had mounted fleet mustangs and disappeared in a cloud of dust. There was not a gray beard nor a bald head in this gathering of youth and brawn and they turned their attention to the hero in the ring. A few jovial spirits took the jackass in charge and forming a procession behind him led him into Nevada City, singing the "John I. Sherwood" song over and 228

#### YREKA, CAL., IN THE 50S

229 over as they marched along. When they arrived at Caldwell's store and bar, they "soaked" the jackass for the drinks for the crowd. Caldwell then named an ounce of gold as the cost of redeeming the pledge. It was quickly contributed and the jackass again headed a procession to another bar where the pawning and redeeming was repeated. All day long, until daylight the next day, with the crowd singing "John I. Sherwood," the jackass was pawned and redeemed, until too husky to sing, the last survivor of the spree let the jackass go, and he, with bulging sides from the liberal supply of feed given him, sought a spot in the first vacant lot he found to contentedly sleep for the next twenty-four hours.



The identity of “John I. Sherwood,” like the lost John, seems never was found.

Soon after the discovery of silver ore on the Comstock lode, the newspapers of California almost unanimously expressed the opinion that silver deposits in large quantities existed in California and would be found by prospectors if they knew what to look for. This resulted in a large number of prospectors picking up anything that had a shining appearance under the supposition it was silver ore, and there were many illusionary silver ore discoveries reported that proved to be costly errors. One of these occurred in Siskiyou County. One day a typical prospector sauntered into an assay office in Yreka, and taking a lounging position against the counter drew from a trouser pocket a piece of rock. Handing it to the assayer, he laconically asked: “What's this?” The assayer, after examining it a moment; laid it down and answered: “Mica.”

Then the following conversation took place.

“Ain't it silver ore?”

“No. No trace of silver about it.”

“What's it worth an ounce?”

“Nothing.”

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The prospector involuntarily gasped and gazed, apparently dumfounded, at the assayer a few moments and then slowly enunciated:

“Great God! I've just married a widow with eight children because she owned a ledge of this.”

**“THE DAYS OF OLD, THE DAYS OF GOLD, THE DAYS OF '49”**

Here you see old Tom Moore, a relic of former days; A bummer, too, they call me now, but what care I for praise? My heart is filled with the, days of old, and oft do I repine For the days of old, and

the days of gold, and the days of '49. I had comrades then who loved me well, a jovial, saucy crew; There were hard cases, I must confess, but still they were tried and true They would never flinch whate'er the pinch, would ne'er fret nor whine, But like good old bricks, would stand the kicks, in the days of '49. There was Kentuck Bill, I know him well, a fellow so full of tricks; At a poker game he was always there, and heavy, too, as bricks; He would play you draw, would ante a slug, or a hatful blind; But in a game of death Bill lost his breath, in the days of '49. There was Racensac Ike, he could outroar a Buffalo bull, you bet; He could roar all day, and roar all night, I believe he's roaring yet.

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One night he fell into a prospect hole, it was a roaring bad design. For in the hole he roared out his soul, in the days of '49. There was New York Jake, a butcher boy, so fond of getting tight, And whenever Jake was on a spree he was spoiling for a fight. One night he ran against a knife in the hands of old Bob Kline; And over Jake we held a wake, in the days of '49. There was Monte Pete, I'll never forget, for the luck he always had; He'd play you both night and day, as long as you had a skad, One night a pistol shot laid him out, 'twas his last layout in fine; It caught Pete sure, right in the door, in the days of '49. There was old lame Jess, that mean old cuss, who never would repent; He never missed a single meal and never paid a cent; But poor, old Jess, like all the rest to death did at last resign; For in his bloom, he went up the flume, in the days of '49. Of all the comrades I had then, not one remains to toast; They've left me here in my misery like some poor wandering ghost; And as I go from place to place, folks call me a traveling sign, Saying, "There's old Tom Moore, a bummer, sure from the days of '49."

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